

Copy Right Free

S. Das
Librarian

Uttarpara Joykrishna Public Library
Govt. of West Bengal

Reprinted from
'The Indian Economic and Social History Review'
1972

Hindu-Muslim Relations in Swadeshi Bengal, 1903-1908

Sumit Sarkar

HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN SWADESHI BENGAL, 1903-1908*

SUMIT SARKAR

Department of History, University of Calcutta

I. Hindus and Muslims in Bengal

Hindu-Muslim relations posed the greatest challenge before the Swadeshi movement, and ultimately proved its greatest failure. The campaign against an arbitrary administrative partition, launched in the name of the essential unity of the Bengali-speaking people, ended with the two socio-religious groups into which that community was almost equally divided¹ further apart from each other and more conscious of their mutual hostility than ever before.

Some amount of historical exploration is evidently necessary to understand the causes of this tragedy. The prejudices and illusions bred by half a century of tangled communal politics make an objective assessment very difficult even today. In dealing with Hindu-Muslim relations, historians (and politicians) have been usually influenced by one of two conflicting stereotypes. On the one hand there is the belief in a kind of golden age of Hindu-Muslim amity, deliberately destroyed by the British through their divide-and-rule techniques—with Curzon, Fuller, and Minto figuring prominently among the villains of the piece. Such ideas were very frequently reflected in Swadeshi speeches and pamphlets, Bipin-chandra Pal for instance stating categorically in one of his Madras

*The present article is a slightly modified version of a chapter in my forthcoming book *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* being published by the People's Publishing House, New Delhi.

1. The frequent administrative changes make an exact estimate a little difficult. Bengal prior to the 1905 partition had (according to the census of 1901) a population of 78.5 millions among whom 40.7 millions were Bengali-speaking. Muslims numbered 25.3 millions: they were mostly concentrated in East Bengal, but there were also quite a number in Bihar. *Imperial Gazetteer of India. Provincial Series—Bengal. Volume I* (Calcutta, 1909), pp. 45-47, 51.

lectures (7 May 1907) that “in the days of my youth, not to go further before, we had no Hindu-Muhammadan problem in any part of India”.² Biographical literature composed by nationalist leaders of this generation is full of nostalgic recollections of this idyllic past,³ and as the full gravity of the communal danger came to be realized, the theory of past unity and British responsibility became a kind of Congress shibboleth. The polar opposite of this viewpoint is of course the famous (or notorious) ‘two-nation theory’, according to which Hindus and Muslims have always been entities fundamentally distinct in ethnic origin, language, and culture as well as in religion. Given classic form in the Pakistan resolution of the Muslim League in 1940, this theory has had many non-Muslim adherents, more or less outspoken. From the days of Dufferin and Lord Cross, the separate “interests of the Mohammedans”⁴ served as the most convenient British conservative pretext for obstructing or delaying political reform in India. Among the majority community, too, there has never been any lack of support for the view that India has been and must remain primarily the land of the Hindus, in which the Muslims are outsiders who must be kept in their place and should never be trusted

2. Bipinchandra Pal, ‘*The Contribution of Islam to the Indian Nation*’, Madras, 7 May 1907. The full text of this speech is given in *Home Political Progs A December 1907 n. 44, Enclosure B (VI)*, p 1. [The Home Public and Home Political Proceedings refer to unpublished Home Department files of the Government of India, preserved at the National Archives].

3. Surendranath Banerji, *A Nation in Making* (Calcutta, 1925, 1963), p. 115, Krishnakumar Mitra, *Atmachari* (Calcutta, 1937), pp. 41-42. Bipinchandra Pal, *Sattar Batar-Atmajivani* (Calcutta, 1926, 1962), pp. 18-21, 103-108. Nripendrachandra Banerji, *At the Cross Roads* (Calcutta, 1950), p. 9. J. C. Bagal, *Pramathanath Bose* (Calcutta, 1955), p. 16.

4. Lord Cross warned Lord Dufferin on 14 April 1887, after the latter had suggested a partial introduction of the elective principle – “I shall be very glad to consider any really matured plan, because I am quite alive to the present situation of affairs in India, but in any step that may be taken, the interests of the Mohammedans must be considered quite as much as the interests of the noisy Bengalee Baboo . . .”. A. K. Majumdar, *Advent of Independence* (Bombay, 1963), p. 364.

Because of their allegedly incorrigible communal proclivities.⁵

Both stereotypes oversimplify (though not probably to the same extent) the complex and changing realities of our sub-continent. Hindu-Muslim relations in fact seem to have varied greatly with region and time, and have always been bound up in an extremely complicated manner with socio-economic, political and cultural developments.

In pre-Plassey Bengal, the Muslims as the ruling community controlled the army and the machinery of criminal justice, and as amils and faujdars staffed the topmost rung of the administrative ladder. But the Hindu upper castes retained an important and in some ways even a preeminent position in society, since fully "nine-tenths of zamindaris were held by Hindus". Hindus also manned the qanungo offices and comprised the principal traders and bankers.⁶ Till the change in the official language in the 1830s, Persian served as a kind of link between the educated of the two communities—it is noteworthy that Rammohan wrote his first major treatise in that language, and brought out the *Miral-ul-Akhbar* soon after the *Samhat Kaumudi*—but there was little in polite Bengali society to correspond to the rich Urdu-based Hindustani culture which had flourished in the heartland of the Mughal Empire. The Ashraf community among the Muslims numbered relatively few in Bengal, and, perhaps uneasily conscious of living in "the backwoods of Indian Islam", often tried—right down to recent times—to flaunt its upcountry or foreign origins and Persian and Arabic learning at the cost of the more natural Bengali.⁷ The Hindu gentry on its part might have resented occasionally the politically inferior position to which it had been relegated and disliked the inequities and harsh

5. In 1937, three years before the Pakistan resolution of the Muslim League, Savarkar declared in a presidential address to the Hindu Mahasabha: "India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but, on the contrary, there are two nations in the main, the Hindus and the Muslims". Quoted in S. Abid Hussain, *The Destiny of Indian Muslims* (Asia, 1965), 108.

6. Dr. N. K. Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement, Volume II* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 229-230.

7. Dr. Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History* (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 50-57.

procedures of Muslim criminal justice;⁸ such things (and not deliberate religious persecution, for which there is precious little evidence) probably help to explain the eagerness with which the bhadralok intelligentsia accepted in the nineteenth century the theory of the British having delivered Bengal from Muslim misrule.

But the vast majority of Bengali Muslims were peasants, in origin probably low-caste Hindus, Buddhists, or simply people who had never been fully assimilated into the structure of Aryan society. Large-scale forcible conversions in an area so far away as East Bengal was from the centers of Muslim political power appears most unlikely; much more important in all probability were Islam's power of attracting the socially oppressed through its egalitarian message and the influence of numerous Muslim holy men (Ibn Batuta for instance mentions the work of Shah Jalal in the Sylhet region).⁹ It is at this popular level that considerable progress was made towards the evolution of a common culture based on the Bengali language and an amalgam of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and primitive folk rites. In 1909, the *Imperial Gazetteer* stated that "It was, until recently, the regular practice of low-class Muhammadans to join in the Durga Puja and other Hindu festivals"; it mentioned also Muslim consultation of Hindu almanacs, worship of Sitala and Manasa, use of vermillion, and joint offerings to village deities before the sowing or transplanting of rice seedlings.¹⁰ Hindu peasants—and sometimes even zamindars—on their part offered their respects to the 'darga's of Muslim 'pir's [shrines of holy men]."¹¹ Synergetic cults like the Satyapir and communities like that of the Bauls emerged in medieval Bengal, with the dominant Sufi tradition

8. 'Kajir Vichar'—the kazi's justice—has remained in Bengal synonymous with judicial arbitrariness.

9. Kaji Abdul Odud, *Hindu-Musalmmaner Birodh* [Hindu-Muslim Conflict] (Viswabharati, 1936), pp. 12-16. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 48. Haridas Mukherji, *Benoy Sarkarer Baithake* (Calcutta, 1944), pp. 574-586.

10. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, *op. cit.*, 48-49.

11. Thus Krishnakumar Mitra has described how in his native village of Baghil (Tangail sub-division of Mymensingh) Hindus contributed an annual 'bruti' for the maintenance of a local 'darga', and zamindars placed offerings before the shrine on festive occasion. *Atmacharit*, p. 42.

supplying a kind of intellectual sanction for such eclectic admixtures.¹² The poetry of Kauji Fakir of Chittagong (early nineteenth century) with its peculiar mingling of the image of Muhammed with that of Krishna supplies a more recent example.¹³ In Bengal, at least, the two-nation theory is a historical absurdity—as has been proved once again of course by the magnificent resurgence of Bengali language and culture against Urdu domination and West Pakistani exploitation, culminating in the emergence of free Bangladesh. At the same time, it has to be admitted that the pre-modern synthesis had serious limitations. Social barriers and taboos remained sufficiently formidable for both communities to retain always a sense of separate identity even at the village level. Syncretist tendencies, all too often took the form of irrational devotionalism and superstition, shared in common; religious reform movements in the nineteenth century—both Hindu and Muslim were bound to regard such cults and rites as a debasement of the pristine purity of their respective faiths.

Under British rule, the economic position and status of the Muslim upper class suffered a sudden and sharp decline. British Collectors and District Magistrates replaced Muslim amils and faujdars, the resumption of 'rent-free' madad-i-maash lands ruined hundreds of old families and dealt a shattering blow to the traditional Islamic educational system, and the change in the official language undermined the Muslim position in the lawcourts.¹⁴ The Ashrafs of Bengal were the earliest and the worst affected, for they had always been a relatively small community more dependent probably on state patronage than the strongly-entrenched Muslim aristocracy of Upper India. The Muslim ulema who had served as judges in the Islamic courts of law and as te Lehrers in the traditional religious schools were also hard hit by the new developments.

12. Mum-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, *Research in the Islamic Revivalism of the 19th Century and Its Effect on the Muslim Society of Bengal* (Pierre Bessaing (Ed.), *Social Research in East Pakistan* (Dacca 1960), pp. 39-42).

13. Kaji Abdul Odud, *Bānglār Jagoroni* [Awakening of Bengal], Viswabharati, 1956, p. 129.

14. W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (London, 1871), pp. 120-122, 137-142.

Economic distress, as well as a conservative distrust of an alien and irreligious system of learning kept such people away from the new schools and colleges, at a time when the Hindu bhadralok castes were eagerly making the switch-over from Persian to English education with a confidence buttressed by rising rent-receipts from zamindari or tenure-holding. In a list of Calcutta University graduates from 1858 to 1881, only 38 names—out of a total of 1720—appear undisputedly Muslim.¹⁵ The educational lag was reflected in the composition of the administrative services, though here British distrust of the Muslims due to their Mutiny and Wahhabi associations probably also played an important part. In April 1871, out of 2111 gazetted posts in Bengal, Europeans held 1338, Hindus 681, and Muslims only 92.¹⁶ In the fourteen districts of East Bengal, stated the Chief Secretary of the new province in a circular of May 1906, Muslims comprised 65.85% of the total population and 41.13% of the total number of literate people, but they held only 15.5% of Government jobs.¹⁷ This disparity in ‘middle class’ development constituted one fertile source of communalism. At another level, the Permanent Settlement and the Regulations of 1799 and 1812 consolidated and greatly enhanced the power of the landlord over his tenants—and in many districts of East Bengal, Hindu zamindars faced a peasantry predominantly Muslim.

The imbalance between the two communities made the Bengal Renaissance almost entirely a movement of the English-educated bhadralok Hindu. The *Sahitya-Sadhan-Charitmala* collection of biographies of one hundred and two nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengali literary figures includes just one Muslim—Mir Musaraf Hussain. For a short while during its Derosian phase, the movement seemed to be heading for a really radical break with Hindu sectarian traditions and the achievement of a truly secular culture. It is noteworthy that Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the author

15. Dr. Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, pp. 161-199. It is unfortunate that Dr. Sinha has left for his readers the labour of counting and classifying the names on this very valuable list, taken from a tract on education published in 1882.

16. W. W. Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, p. 126.

17. Lyon's Circular No. 5221-3C of 25 May 1906--reprinted in the *Bengalee* of 13 June 1906.

of an iconoclastic revision of the Ramayana legend, also wrote a magnificent farce on the theme of Hindu zamindar who boasts of his orthodoxy and condemns the young men of Calcutta for touching food prepared by Muslims—while he himself is planning to seduce a Muslim peasant girl.¹⁸ But as the century progressed, the awakening national pride of the Bengali bhadralok sought sustenance more and more in images of ancient Hindu glory and medieval Hindu resistance to Muslim rule, in stories of Rajput, Sikh, and Maratha heroism and the real or imaginary exploits of Pratapaditya, Sitaram, or the Sanyasi raiders of Bengal. It has been argued that in much of this patriotic literature, the Muslims were serving merely as convenient whipping-boys; Government officials like Bankimchandra could hardly attack the British openly. If true, this explanation only reveals all the more clearly the unconscious but almost universal bhadralok assumption that the sentiments of Muslim contemporaries were not worthy of serious notice, since the English-educated among them (who alone could be—and were usually—treated as social equals) were just a handful while the vast majority were 'ignorant' peasants. Patriotism tended to be identified with Hindu revivalism, 'Hindu' and 'national' came to be used as almost synonymous terms—a good example would be 'National' Nabagopal Mitra with his 'Hindu' mela—and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* correspondent who on 19 August 1905 expressed his concern about the fate of "the Bengalis, by which terms I mean, throughout this letter, the Hindu portion of it" was merely making explicit a demographically fantastic but still very common assumption.

Recalling his boyhood days at Kishoregunj, Nirad C. Chaudhuri has tried to sum up the pre-1905 bhadralok Hindu attitude towards the Muslims as a compound of "four modes of feeling". "In the first place, we felt a retrospective hostility towards the Muslims for their one-time domination of us, the Hindus: secondly, on the plane of thought we were utterly indifferent to the Muslims as an element in contemporary society; thirdly, we had friendliness for the Mus-

18. Michael Madhusudan Dutt, *Buro Shaliker Ghare Ro* (Calcutta, 1860), Act II, Scene I. I am afraid the title is very nearly untranslatable—'The Ways of an Old Rake' is the nearest that I can get to it.

lims of our own economic and social status with whom we came into personal contact: our fourth feeling was mixed concern and contempt for the Muslim peasant, whom we saw in the same light as we saw our low-caste Hindu tenants, or, in other words, as our live-stock".¹⁹ The judgement is harshly-worded but not, perhaps, fundamentally unjust; Swadeshi recollections of the lost golden age of alleged Hindu-Muslim amity all too often betray similar assumptions of superiority. Thus, in an editorial note dated 14 December 1905, the *Anrita Bazar Patrika* asserted that relations between the two communities had been ideal in the past: "The Mahomedans trustfully depended on their Hindu fellow-citizens for help and advice in all matters . . .". But now the Partition had come, and it was not merely territorial in its intent—the British wanted to make it "a partition between the Hindus and Mahomedans as well as between landlords and tenants . . . we are astounded to learn that strenuous efforts are being made to create discord between class and class where before there reigned peace and mutual trust".

But Partition and Government policy in the new province only brought to the surface tensions already implicit in Bengali life. Long before 1905, forces had been at work in Muslim society which tended to make it more and more resentful of Hindu assumptions of superiority.

The Muslim ulema had reacted to the loss of their old world with a powerful revivalist movement calling for a return to the primitive purity of Islam, to the corruption of which they attributed the political and social disaster which had overtaken their community. At one time commonly called Indian Wahhabism, modern research has shown that this militant revival really owed much more to the ideas of Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1703-62), transmitted through his son Abdul Aziz (1746-1834) to Sayyid Ahmed of Bareilly (1786-1831). For two generations following Abdul Azis's fatwa in 1803 (which declared India to have become 'Dar-ul-Harb', leaving to the faithful no other choice except 'jehad' or 'hijra'—religious war or emi-

19. Nirad C Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian* (London 1951), p. 233.

gration), this 'Tariqat-i-Muhammadiyah' movement fought bitterly and valiantly against the enemies of Islam — first the Sikhs and then the British, till the latter destroyed the Patna propaganda centre and the "rebel camps" on the North-West Frontier in the 1860s. Hunter has left a vivid and often moving account of the support the movement obtained from the down-trodden Muslim masses, stirred by religious frenzy as well as by the egalitarian appeal of 'Wahhabism'.²⁰ A related, but distinct, movement, more specifically lower class and agrarian in its character, was that of the Fataizis in Bengal, founded by Haji Shariatulla of Faridpur (1781-1826) after his return from Arabia.²¹ The combination of rigid orthodoxy with a kind of "religious nationalism" was continued in the Deoband seminary, established in 1867 by the Mutiny veteran Maulana Muhammed Qasim; fifty years later, this school produced the revolutionary Ubaidullah Sindhi and greatly contributed to the Pan-Islamic Khilafat movement.²²

The spell of revivalism on the Muslim mind was partly broken in upper India after the 1860s through the efforts of Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), who urged his co-religionists to abandon their hostility towards British rule and take to English education as the surest road to jobs and material progress, and who through his Urdu monthly *Fahzibul Akhlaq* [Social Reformer] tried to modernize to some extent Islamic theology and social practices.²³ In Bengal, a similar movement had been started in 1863 with the foundation of the Muhammadan Literary Society by Abdul Latif. Syed Amir Ali offered a liberal reinterpretation of the faith in his *Spirit of Islam*, and together with Syed Amir Hussain organized the Central National Mohomedan Association in Calcutta in 1876, which in its

20. W. W. Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, Chapter I-III, Muinuddin Ahmad Khan, *Research in Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 34-38, Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Asia, 1963), Chapter I.

21. L. S. S. O' Molley, *Faridpur District Gazetteer* (Calcutta 1925), pp. 37-46, Muinuddin Ahmad Khan, *Research in Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 33-34.

22. Abid Hussain, *Destiny of Indian Muslims*, pp. 42-44, 74-79, Ziya-ul-Hassan Faruqi, *Deoband School*, Chapters II, III.

23. S. Abid Hussain, *Destiny of Indian Muslims*, pp. 23-33, V. V. Gankovsky and L. R. Gordon-Polonskaya, *A. History of Pakistan* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 12-16.

turn inspired the establishment of numerous local Anjumans in Bengal district towns.²⁴ Far from contributing to 'secular nationalism', however, English education stimulated the Muslim sense of having been left behind in the race for jobs and political influence by the Hindus—and so, paradoxically enough, 'modernist' Aligarh in the end became the seedbed of modern Muslim separatism, while conservative Deoband remained steadfastly opposed to Pakistan. It must be added that the 'modernism' of Syed Ahmed and Amir Ali was far more limited than that of their earlier counterparts among the Hindus. In order to obtain funds from conservative-minded Muslim gentry for the Aligarh College, Syed Ahmed closed down the Tahsibul Akhlaq,²⁵ and Mohsin-ul-Mulk, who succeeded him as College Secretary was even more conciliatory in his attitude towards the ulemas.²⁶ In Bengal, the Anjumans concentrated on stimulating Muslim solidarity and became strongholds of traditionalist 'maulvi' influence.²⁷ They became an important element, in fact, in the process of 'Islamization' of rural Muslim society which had been started by the revivalists and was being continued by the Ta'aifyuni sect among the 'Wahhabis'—who under Karamat Ali (1800-73) had abandoned the political fight against the British and concentrated all their efforts on the eradication of "non-Islamic superstitions" among the peasantry.²⁸

Revivalism and 'reform' alike contributed to the disenchantment of Muslims with the composite Bengali culture which had evolved in pre-modern times. The Ashraf community—and following their lead, the talukdar or prosperous peasant in search of respectability—tried to model themselves on the Muslim aristocracy of upper India, rejected Bengali for Urdu and Persian, and claimed foreign

24. G. A. Natesan, *Eminent Mussalmans* (Madras, n.d), p. 148. Kaji Abdul Odud, *Banglar Jagoran* (Viswabharati, 1956), pp. 125-128.

25. S. Abid Hussain, *Destiny of Indian Muslims*, p. 31.

26. G. A. Natesan, *Eminent Mussalmans*, p. 79.

27. Kaji Abdurl Odud, *Bangla Jagoran*, pp. 128-129.

28. Imperial Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 50. Muinuddin Ahmad Khan, *Research in Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 36-38.

origin as a status symbol.²⁹ A modern Bangladesh scholar has drawn attention to the fantastic nature of these claims: Muslims of foreign origin numbered 266,378 in the whole of Bengal (outside Calcutta) according to the 1871 Census; thirty years later there were 862,290 such claimants in the single district of Noakhali.³⁰ Among the Muslim peasantry, the 'Wahhabis' and the Faraizis violently denounced polytheism (Shirk) and sinful innovation (Bid'ah)—and these obviously included participation in Hindu festivals and rites, the adoration of 'pirs', and numerous other syncretist cults and practices so long tolerated or even encouraged by the dominant Sufist tradition. Shah Ismail, Sayyid Ahmad's companion and fellow-martyr, had drawn up a formidable list of such 'un-Islamic' customs in his *Taqwiyat al-Imām* (c. 1823).³¹ Revivalism at times acquired an anti-zamindar character, as under Titu Mir near Barasat in 1831, and the Faraizi leader Dudu Mian in Faridpur between 1838 and 1847;³² the Faraizis were also prominent in the Pabna riots of the early 1870s. As a Government official pointed out in 1873, "combination is much more easy among a sect (the Ferazis) whose faith enjoins absolute social equality than among Hindus who are divided into endless varieties of caste, jealous and distrustful of each other".³³ While rebellious peasants sometimes "broke into the houses of Musalman and Hindu landholders with perfect impartiality",³⁴ agrarian riots could also easily acquire a communal character - Titu Mir's movement for instance was sparked off by a cess imposed on Wahhabis by a Hindu zamindar, and initially took the form of a demonstrative slaughter of cows.³⁵

29. Dr Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, pp. 56-57.

30. Abdul Majed Khan, *Research about Muslim Aristocracy in East Pakistan*—Pierre Bessaingnet (Ed.), *Social Research in East Pakistan*, pp. 20-21.

31. Mumuddin Ahmad Khan, *Research in Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 33, 44.

32. Dr S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India 1765-1857* (Calcutta, 1955), pp. 95-97, 112-114.

33. J. G. Charles, officiating Joint Magistrate to the Collector of Dacca, 19 September 1873—*A Report on the Origin, etc., of Agrarian Combinations in Eastern Bengal, Appendix C*. Quoted in Dr. Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, p. 28.

34. Hunter's description of Titu Mir's movement—*Indian Mussalmans*, p. 101.

35. Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances*, pp. 95-97.

On the all-India level, the proportion of Muslims among Congress delegates had risen to about one-sixth of the total between 1888 and 1892, despite Syed Ahmed's campaigns; but it declined sharply thereafter, as relations worsened in Maharashtra and large areas of upper India as a result of the Ganapati 'utsava', the anti-cow slaughter campaign, and the Urdu-Nagri controversy.^{35a} Thus Hindu revivalism supplied fresh wind to the sails of the separatist movement being promoted from Aligarh. The Gorakhshini Sabhas provoked serious riots in the districts of Gaya, Shahabad and Saran in Bihar during the summer of 1893,^{35b} but in Bengal proper rural life remained undisturbed—agrarian tensions had also died down for a while with the passage of the 1885 Tenancy Act. The Talla riots in North Calcutta in 1897 started with a land dispute involving Maharaja Jotindramohan Tagore and some lower-class Muslim tenants; but it apparently developed into a general outburst of the poor of both communities "against the Europeans"—which the Secretary of State felt was "the only really ugly feature" about the whole affair.^{35c}

The Muslim upper class in Bengal, however, had kept almost entirely aloof from the Congress from the earliest days—no doubt largely because their educational backwardness was more evident here than anywhere else, producing a sense of inferiority and an almighty fear of displeasing the rulers. The one Bengali Muslim to attain any kind of prominence in Congress affairs or organization

35a. Muslims numbered 219 out of 1248 at the Allahabad Congress (1888), 248 out of 1889 at Bombay (1889), 115 out of 677 at Calcutta (1890), and 91 out of 625 at Allahabad (1892)—the figures for the 1891 Congress are not available. Except at the Lucknow Congress of 1899, held at the chief centre of Hindustani culture (313 Muslims out of 789, all but five of them however coming from the North West Province and Oudh), the number never again passed the one hundred mark. Muslims numbered only 25 out of 1584 at Poona in 1895, and 45 out of 1663 at Calcutta in 1906. Syed Razi Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905-1910* (London, 1964), Appendix I, p. 221.

35b. C. E. Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors* (Calcutta, 1902), Volume II, pp. 952-54.

35c. Hamilton to Elgin, 26 August 1897—quoted in A. K. Majumdar, *Advent of Independence*, p. 345.

prior to 1905 seems to have been Abul Kasem of Burdwan.³⁶ Amir Ali's National Muhammadan Association rejected Surendranath's overture, conveyed through W. S. Blunt, to participate in an united campaign against the watering-down of the Ilbert Bill.³⁷ Some Calcutta Muslim leaders were being attracted—as yet not very strongly—by Pan-Islamic ideas: Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani himself had visited the city in the early 1880s.³⁸ As always, the influence of that great movement was complex and contradictory; emphasizing Islam's distinctive ethos and extra-Indian loyalties, it also at times urged reforms to adopt the faith to modern conditions—and it is not unlikely that some of the Bengali Muslims who joined the national movement in the 1905 days had been swayed by the bitter anti-West propaganda being carried on by the Calcutta-based Persian weekly *Roznama-i-Mukaddam-Hablu'l Mateen*, organ of exiled Iranian patriots.³⁹

II. The Muslims and the Swadeshi Movement

In course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, British policy and attitude towards the Indian Muslims underwent a remarkable sea-change. The image of the dangerous fanatic of Mutiny and Wahabi notoriety was replaced by that of the dependable rough diamond full of martial virtues⁴⁰ and preferable by far to the talkative and audacious Bengali babus,—“who like to think themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the English

36. Abul Kasem was elected Member of the Congress Constitution Committee in 1904, and also of the Standing Committee chosen at the 1905 Congress. Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom* (Madras, 1915), pp. 413, 440.

37. W. S. Blunt, *India Under Ripon*, pp. 109-112, 121—cited in Dr. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bengal, Volume I* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 471-472.

38. Kaji Abdul Qadid, *Banglar Jagoran*, pp. 126-127.

39. *Annual Report on Indian Papers in the Bengal Presidency, Volume IV* (Calcutta, 1909), p. 163.

40. That the Bengali Muslim was as unimportant in the Indian Army as the Bengali Hindu was of course conveniently forgotten. For a discussion of the development of the prejudice against the Bengali bhadralok, cf. Dr. Amalés Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge* (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 86-91.

will have been turned out, and a Bengali babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta . . .”⁴¹ Officials like Fraser and Risley wanted to transfer parts of East Bengal to Assam not on administrative grounds alone, as publicly announced. The intention also was “to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule”,⁴² and Curzon in course of his 1904 tour realized that that aim could be attained even more effectively by a whole new province, which “would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman Viceroys and Kings . . .”.⁴³ Fuller as the head of the new administration promptly started “playing off the two sections of the population against each other”,⁴⁴ and Hare carried on the good work, suggesting at one time a 2 : 1 ratio of Muslims to Hindus in new appointments,⁴⁵ recruiting Muslims for the police service “as quickly as possible”,⁴⁶ and repeatedly pressing Minto to sanction a Rs. 14 lakh loan to save Nawab Salimulla of Dacca from his creditors as “a political matter of great importance”.⁴⁷ While educated Muslims were wooed mainly through the offer of jobs and the lure of political influence in the new Muslim majority province, there were instances of grosser kinds of incitement—as when Hindu schoolboys of Kishoregunj were fined Rs. 110/- for the shouting of Bande Mataram, and the money was ordered to be paid to

41. Curzon to Brodrick, 17 February 1904—*Curzon Collection, MSS. Eur. F. III/163* (Volume VIII). (National Archives).

42. Note by H. H. Risley, 6 December 1904—*Home Public Progs A February 1905 n. 164*.

43. Curzon’s speech at Dacca, 18 February 1904—P. Mukerjee, *All About Partition* (Calcutta, 1905), p. 39.

44. Minto to Morley, 15 August 1906—*Minto Papers, M1006*. (National Archives).

45. Hare to Minto, 31 October 1906. The Viceroy, however, wanted the Lieutenant-Governor to be a little more discreet (Minto to Hare, 11 November 1906, 13, December 1906), and eventually Hare agreed that “perhaps it may not be wise to be so definite”—Hare to Minto, 16 December 1906. *Ibid. M1979*.

46. Telegram from the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam to the Viceroy, 11 July 1907. *Ibid. M981*.

47. Hare to Dunlop Smith, 16 February 1907. Hare to Minto, 27 April 1907.—*Ibid. M980*.

the local Anjuman-i-Islamia.⁴⁸ Government circles also displayed a novel and slightly suspicious solicitude for the Muslim peasants. Minto informed Morley that there was "something of a resemblance in the new province to our Irish difficulties",⁴⁹ and Hare felt that "it is hardly realized how terrible is the power of an unscrupulous landlord".⁵⁰ Such concern had been conspicuous by its absence throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Government divide-and-rule tactics rudely shattered the complacence hitherto evident in nationalist circles in Bengal as regards the communal problem, and a mass movement such as the boycott strove to be obviously demanded far greater contact with the Muslims than had been required by the 'mendicant' elite-politics of the earlier age. Swadeshi propaganda consequently took up Hindu-Muslim unity as one of its principal themes, and broadcast it through innumerable speeches, pamphlets, and songs. In 1909, an official survey of the Indian press remarked that "ever since the Partition of Bengal the influential Hindu papers have tried to win over the Muhammedans to their side", and it particularly referred to the *Sanjibani*'s "endeavour to weld the different nationalities in India, especially the Hindus and the Muhammedans, into one nation".⁵¹ Rabindranath's *Bhandar* ran a discussion forum on the problem.⁵² Bipinchandra Pal in the *Bangadarshan* pleaded for greater cultural contacts between the two communities, and made the interesting point that the Extremist programme of boycott of Government jobs would automatically end Hindu-Muslim rivalry if

48. *Bengalee*, 19 May 1906.

49. Minto to Morley, 15 August 1906—*Minto Papers M1006*.

50. Hare to Minto, 21 November 1907—*Ibid M981*.

51. *Annual Report on Indian Papers in the Bengal Presidency, Volume IV*, (Calcutta, 1909), pp. 151, 158.

52. *Bhandar*, Asar 1312, and again (after the first clashes in Mymensingh) in Asar 1313 [June-July 1905/1906]. The participants included Maulvi Sirajul Islam, Narendra Nath Sen, Byomkesh Mustafi, Rasikmohan Chakrabarti, Jogendranath Mukherji, Bipradas Pal Chaudhuri, Nibaran Dasgupta and Bijoychandra Majumdar. Most of them emphasized the need for greater cultural contacts, and argued that Hindu-Muslim political rivalry was largely an artificial creation of the British, and in any case involved only a tiny minority.

it was ever seriously implemented.⁵³ Dhirenranath Chaudhuri pointed out in the *Nabyabharat* that the Muslims could no more be regarded today as foreign invaders than the Rajputs or for that matter the Aryans themselves; he even declared that Hindus should be prepared to stop the Shivaji and the Pratapaditya festivals if that was found necessary for unity.⁵⁴ Communal harmony was sought to be promoted through joint-functions during Id and 'National Dinners'.⁵⁵ Aswinicoomar Banerji suggested a revival of the Satyapir cult, and festivals in honour of Akbar and Mir Kasim were proposed on several occasions.⁵⁶ In sharp contrast to much of nineteenth century literature, Muslim rule was now often described to have been far better than the English⁵⁷—and the *Yugantar* hailed 1857 as "the first war of independence by the Hindus and Musalmans of India".⁵⁸

Yet side by side with all this went on the evocation—on a totally unprecedented scale—of traditional Hinduism with its taboos and rites and philosophy, as morale-booster for the activists and as the

53. *Bangacchode Banger Abastha* [Bengal after Partition], *Bangadarshan* Agrahan 1312 [November-December 1905]. It is significant that neither Pal nor the contributors to the *Bhundar* revealed any awareness of the second—and deeper—source of communal tension of Bengal: the relations between Hindu bhadralok gentry and Muslim peasants.

54. *Bharater Prajaniti* [A Policy for the People in India], *Nabyabharat*, Bhadra 1312 [August-September 1905].

55. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 November 1905, reported an Id gathering which was addressed by Surendranath, A. C. Banerji, and Aswinikumar Dutt. There was another such 'Id reunion' on 26 November 1906, attended by men like Surendranath Banerji, Bhupendranath Bose, Abdul Hamid Ghuznavi, and Abdur Rasul—*Abstract of Reports from Bengal during second half of November 1906*, Para 3 [*Home Public Progs. A, February 1907, n. 152-154*] 600 Hindus, Muslims, Brahmos and Christians participated in the 'National Dinner' of 14 September 1906 at Albert Hall organized by Ghuznavi and Prithvischandra Roy. The *Sanjibani* hailed such inter-dining,* the *Hitavadi* denounced it. *Bengali*, 12 September 1906. *Sanjibani*, 20 September 1906, *Hitavadi* 21 September 1906—*Report on Native Papers (Bengal) for Week ending 29 September 1906* (Referred to henceforward as *RNP (B)*).

56. *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1906-1907*, pp. 128-129

57. *Hitavarta*, 25 June 1905—*RNP(B) for Week ending 1 July 1905*. *Yugantar*, 10 June 1906—*RNP(B) for Week ending 16 June 1906*.

58. *Yugantar*, 16 December 1906—*RNP(B) for Week ending 22 December 1906*.

primary communication medium between the intelligentsia and the masses. The Shivaji Utsava, far from being abandoned, was celebrated in June 1906 under Extremist auspices in an ostentatiously Hindu manner with the introduction for the first time of image of Bhawani. The objections of the Anti-Circular Society were brushed aside, and Tilak bluntly declared: "We are all Hindus and idolators and I am not ashamed of the fact . . . We cannot conceive of Shivaji without Bhawani"⁵⁹ How deeply even nationalist-minded Muslims felt about the Swadeshi cult of Bankimchandra and things like the Shivaji Utsava can be appreciated from the pages of the *Soltan*⁶⁰ and the *Mussalman*.⁶¹

Bipin Chandra Pal tried to reconcile these two apparently contradictory aspects of the Swadeshi age through "composite patriotism". In 1903, in a speech at that year's Shivaji Utsava, he argued that the "homage to the Genius of the great Hindu Nation" showed no animus at all towards the Muslims--an Akbar celebration would be equally welcome.⁶² He went on to develop his conception of "the future progress of India" as dependent "upon the advance of these particular communities along their own particular lines. The Hindu shall help the realization of the present national ideal, not by ceasing to be Hindu nor by ignoring his peculiar course of development, but by developing the higher features of his own culture and civilization. So the Mohomedan shall best contribute to the common progress of the nation by developing his own special excellences."⁶³

59. *Bengalee*, 6 June 1906

60 "It has yet to be shown that Sivaji had any vast patriotic schemes in his contemplation . . . We know that the object of our Hindu brethren in celebrating the Sivaji festival is neither to wound Mussalman feelings nor to vilify the reign of Aurangzeb . . . But . . . in order to give high praise to Sivaji, one cannot but censure Mussalman rule."—*Soltan*, 8 June 1906—*RNP(B) for Week ending 16 June 1906*.

61 The *Mussalman* attacked the "anti-Muslim bigotry" of Bankimchandra on 14 December 1906, and criticized on 26 April 1907 the nationalist plans for holding a Bankim anniversary--this time it made an explicit reference to the *Anandmath* passages with their abuse of 'Yavanas'. The latter issue also contained a sharp attack on Shivaji festivals.

62 This of course missed the real point—the logical counterpart of Shivaji is obviously not Akbar, but Aurangzeb.

63. Bipinchandra Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj* (Calcutta 1954), pp. 85-87.

Pal in fact visualized a “federal” India, but one in which the units were to be, not language-based nationalities, but the religious communities, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian (sometimes he mentioned also the aboriginal tribes as another element), each of which “would preserve its distinctive features and by cultivating them contribute to the common national life of India”.⁶⁴ He used this theory to justify the ultra-Hindu character of the 1906 festival, and explicitly rejected in this context the alternative ideal of a purely secular nationalism—on the ground that an irreligious national life would ultimately lead to immorality and atheism in personal life also.⁶⁵ Rabindranath in 1905 seems to have had a somewhat similar conception of national unity, when he wanted his ‘Swadeshi Samaj’ to be headed jointly by a Hindu and a Muslim;⁶⁶ the poet, however radically modified his views after the riots of 1906-1907. The *Bangabasi* after the Surat split thought the Congress to be a good riddance, and going one step beyond Pal, suggested that the adherents of the different religions should “each form a party of their own”, and then cooperate among themselves.⁶⁷ A contemporary pamphlet thought that all faiths contain elements of truth, but insisted that the Hindus and the Muslims should stick to their respective beliefs—for the alternative might be loss of faith, which, so the author believed, ruined the Roman Empire.⁶⁸ Such theories could provide a platform on which traditionalist Hindus and Muslims could come together for a while without impairing their orthodoxy—as happened more or less in the immediate post-war

64. Bipinchandra Pal, *Shivaji-Utsava—Bangadurshan*, Bhadra 1313 . . [August-September 1906].

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Abastha O Byabastha* [The Situation and Our Tasks]—*Rabindra Rachnabali*, Vol. III, p. 612.

67. *Bangabasi*, 4 January 1908. The *Sandhya* argued in similar fashion two days later: “That hotchpotch of all castes will not and cannot last. Make the Congress a thing purely for the Hindus or purely for the Muhammedans and it will last: establish it with the auspicious name of religion and it will endure . . .” *RNP(B) for Week ending 11 January 1908*.

68. Aswinikumar Chattopadhyay, *Kajer Bai bā Bāstab Unnatir prakriti patha chinta* [Practical Handbook, or Reflections on the True Way to Material Progress], Calcutta 1907, p. 55.

years when Gandhi and the Khilafat leaders joined hands in the Non-Cooperation Movement.⁶⁹ But the limitations of this approach to Hindu-Muslim unity are evident today. It often involved in practice a virtual abandonment of the task of internal reform and modernization of orthodox Hinduism and Islam—and yet there was much that was mutually hostile in the traditions of both.⁷⁰ And if the 'federal' India of the future was to have the religious communities as its constituents, a basic disagreement between them would open the door for a partition of the country on communal lines. Only one short step thus logically divides Pal's 'composite patriotism' from the two-nation theory.

In view of the formidable barriers to unity set up by tradition, British policy, and the attitudes of many Hindu nationalists, what is surprising is not the eventual alienation of the bulk of the Muslims, but the extent of their participation in the Swadeshi movement. That this attained quite respectable dimensions is a largely-forgotten fact which deserves emphasis. Prayers against the Partition were reported from mosques in Mymensingh in January 1904 and in Barisal and Serampore in August 1905.⁷¹ In the first wave of meetings which followed the announcement of the Partition decision in the July 1905, Muslims—sometimes the local zamindar—figured as presidents at Kishoreganj, Bogra, Madaripur, Banoripara, Khan-khanpore and Tangail;⁷² eighteen months later a police report was still commenting acidly about "the fashion at Hindu meetings to put up a Mahomedan as their president whether he is qualified or not . . .".⁷³ There was always a sizable number of Muslims among

69. In a lecture at the Benaras University, Mohammad Ali declared that "if Hindus became true Hindus and Muslims true Muslims all the friction would disappear in a moment". G. A. Natesan, *Eminent Mussalmans*, p. 517. Pal bitterly opposed the Khilafat alliance—but then consistency was hardly his strong point.

70. One has only to remember the Hindu horror of cow-slaughter—an important traditional element of the Muslim Bakr-Id—and Islam's scorn for idolatry. The Shiva-Ji cult itself would be another good example of mutually-conflicting historical traditions.

71. *Bengalee*, 10 January 1904, 2 August 1905, 8 August 1905.

72. *Ibid.*, 21 July 1905, 30 July 1905, 3 August 1905, 15 August 1905

73. *Abstract of Reports from Eastern Bengal and Assam during first half of December 1906—Home Public Progs. A, February 1907*, n. 265.

the regular Swadeshi orators, and a practice developed “of sending out agitators in couples consisting of a Hindu and a Muhammadan”.⁷⁴ While an element of stage-management may be suspected in the seconding of resolutions by Muslim representatives “of the peasant class” at Pabna (23 July 1905);⁷⁵ or in the Khulna meeting presided over by the local talukdar where a “very leading part” was allegedly played by “Mahomedans and the cultivating classes”,⁷⁶ there were also many heart-warming scenes of fraternization. On 23 September 1905, Hindu and Muslim students of Calcutta marched hand in hand to a 10,000 strong rally at Rajar Bazar, where Rasul declared in ringing terms: “We both Hindus and Mahomedans here belong to the same mother-country — Bengal”.⁷⁷ Brahmin Pandits and Muslims embraced each other,⁷⁸ the strains of the ‘Bande Mataram’ mingled with the ‘Allah-ho-Akbar’⁷⁹—and in a Tangail village, in reply to a Muslim who asked “will the Hindoos treat Musalmans as equals”, the Hindu speaker replied that those who did not do so would be infidels.⁸⁰ On 16 February 1906, the Muslims of Calcutta organized a reception at the Albert Hall in honour of the ‘sufferers’ in the Swadeshi cause,⁸¹ and 4000 Muslims are said to have gathered at the College Square on 13 May 1906 to denounce the dispersal of the Barisal Provincial Conference (which incidentally had had a Muslim—Abdur Rasul — as President for the first time).⁸² By the autumn of 1906, the Muslim separatist counter-campaign in support of Fuller and

74. *Abstract of Reports from Bengal during first half of February 1907 -- Home Public Progs. A, April 1907, n. 207-210.*

75. *Bengalee*, 26 July 1905.

76. *Ibid.*, 8 August 1905.

77. *Ibid.*, 24 September 1905; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 25 September 1905

78. At Manikgunj—*Bengalee*, 11 October 1905, and at Khulna —*Bande Mataram* 26 May 1907.

79. This is reported from Hooghly (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 29 August 1905), and Muktagacha (*Ibid.*, 18 October 1905).

80. *Bengalee*, 14 September 1905.

81. Jogendranath Bandopadhyay, *Lanchchiter Samman* [Honour of the Humiliated] Calcutta 1906, pp. 8-9.

82. *Bangalee*, 11 May, 15 May 1906.

the Partition had gathered considerable strength, but the *Bangalee* could still list 67 meetings on 'rakhi-day' at which Muslim participation had been noticeable.⁸³ Meanwhile in Barisal Aswinikumar Dutta was consolidating his hold on the peasantry through famine-relief work on an impressive scale, and the message of Swadeshi was being spread through the 'jari'-songs composed by the Muslim folk-poet Mofisuddin Bayati.⁸⁴

Some amount of Muslim participation can in fact be traced in virtually every aspect of the Swadeshi movement. Guznavi's United Bengal Company, the Bengal Hosiery Company started by Guznavi and the Nawab of Bogra, and the Bengal Steam Navigation Company of the Chittagong merchants represented successful examples of Muslim Swadeshi entrepreneurship.⁸⁵ Abdur Rasul was one of the first among the nationalist leaders to call for a national university as the fittest answer to the Carlyle Circular,⁸⁶ six Muslims were included in the 92-member National Council of Education⁸⁷ -- though the original promise of providing religious education for Muslim boys as well as for Hindus was never kept.⁸⁸ Abul Husain and Liakat Husain were extremely prominent as agitators during the days of the great East Indian Railway strike in 1906, and the Muslim drivers on the Eastern Bengal State Railway took pledges on the Kur'an when they in their turn walked out in December 1907.⁸⁹ Muslims were active members of the Brahmo-led Anti-Circular Society -- though not, it seems, of most of the other

83. *Ibid.*, 24 October, 25 October, 26 October, 28 October 1906.

84. Saratkumar Roy, *Mihatma Aswinikumar* (Calcutta 1926), p. 130.

85. *Bengal Swadeshi A Revival of Industries and Commerce--Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine*, May 1909

86. Rasul presided over the Field and Academy Club gathering of 24 October 1905 -- which is the very first meeting to be recorded in Kedarnath Dasgupta's Chronological survey of the educational boycott movement. *Shikshar Andolan* (Calcutta, 1905), Part III.

87. Haridas and Uma Mukherji, *Swadeshi Andolane Musalman Sampraday--Swadeshi Andolan O Bangla Navayug* (Calcutta, 1961), Chapter VII.

88. *Bangalee*, 13 March, 1906.

89. *Home Public Prog. B, October 1906*, n. 13; *Administration of Bengal Under Andrew Fraser (1903-08)*, 24-30

Samitis.⁹⁰ The early revolutionaries tended to be somewhat aggressively Hindu and extremely suspicious of Muslims—yet even here Bhupendranath Dutta names Mujibur Rahaman as connected with the Calcutta Anushilan at one stage, and Abul Kalam Azad has left a tantalizingly brief account of his contacts with Aurobindo's circle established through Shyamsundar Chakraborty.⁹¹

The Swadeshi Muslims included a few zamindars and big-wigs who—like many of their Hindu counterparts—confined their activities to signing petitions, lending their names to 'rakhi-bandhan', National Rund, or similar appeals, and occasionally presiding over meetings. Among men of this type may be mentioned Nawab Abdur Sobhan Chaudhuri of Bogra,⁹² Salimulla's brother Khwaja Atikulla, who moved the anti-Partition resolution at the Calcutta Congress;⁹³ and Khan Bahadur Mohammed Yusuf, the President of the Central National Muhammadan Association, who presided over the Swadeshi rally at the Federation Hall site on 16 October 1906.⁹⁴ Chaudhuri Ghulam Ali Moula of Barisal signed the 'rakhi'-appeals of 1906 and 1907;⁹⁵ Syed Motahar Husain—another zamindar of the same district—presided over the first anniversary celebration of the Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti in August;⁹⁶ and Chaudhuri Alimuzzaman

90. *Annual Report of Inti-Circular Society--Bengalee*, 7-10 November 1906.

91. Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta, *Bharater Dwitiya Swadhinata Sangram* (Calcutta 1949), p. 104. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (New Delhi 1959), pp. 4-5.

92. The Nawab of Bogra signed a joint telegram of Rajshahi Division zamindars to the Secretary of State protesting against the Partition (*Bengalee*, 25 July 1905), and his name figured in a National Fund Appeal in December 1905 (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 December 1905). He was also one of the original directors of the Bangalakshmi Cotton Mills (*Bengalee*, 6 March 1906).

93. *Bengalee*, 29 December 1906. Atikulla had quarrelled with his brother over the family estates, and apparently had been won for the Swadeshi cause after a meeting with Motilal Ghosh on 21 September 1906—*Abstract of Reports from Eastern Bengal and Assam during second half of September 1906*, *Home Public Progs. A*, December 1906, n. 144-148.

94. *Bengalee*, 18 October 1906.

95. *Ibid.*, 9 October 1906. *Bande Mataram*, 8 October 1907.

96. *Samitis in the Bakargunj District, Supplementary Report*, p. 29. *Home Political Deposit*, July 1909, n. 13.

of Faridpur in February 1907 headed an anti-Partition memorial signed by "about a thousand other Mahomedan zamindars, Taluqdars, Jotedars, traders and others" of his district.⁹⁷ But the bulk of the Muslim upper class remained either politically indifferent or hostile, and no one on the Swadeshi side could really match in social stature or influence men like Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri of Mymensingh, and Amir Husain of Calcutta. Mohammad Yusuf, a "weak old man" according to official reports, had to pay dearly for his Swadeshi sympathies—his co-religionists ousted him from the Central National Muhammedan Association.⁹⁸

Abul Kasem of Burdwan, who had already served on Congress Committees, Abdul Halim Guznavi, petty zamindar of Tangail and Calcutta lawyer, and Abdur Rasul the Anglicized barrister⁹⁹ represented a second type of Swadeshi Muslim, all but indistinguishable in social position and outlook from the usual 'middle class' Hindu Congress leader. Abul Kasem, despite—or perhaps because of—his established Congress connections, seems to have been less active than the others, though he did address occasional meetings in Calcutta, 24 Parganas, and his home district of Burdwan¹⁰⁰ and went on attending provincial conferences even in the ebb-tide of the movement.¹⁰¹ He had been made Secretary of the Bengal Muhammedan Association (the Swadeshi Muslim's counter-blast to the Muslim League) during its first year, but chose to absent himself from Calcutta for the major part of his term and thus

97. *Mussalman*, 8 February 1907.

98. *Fortnightly Report from the Government of Bengal*, 26 October 1906—*Home Public Progs. A December 1906*, n. 147. Abstract of Reports from Bengal during first half of 1906—*Home Public Progs. A February 1907* n. 265.

99. He generally spoke in English, and had an English wife.

100. At Naren Sen's Square in Calcutta on 21 November 1905 (*Amrita Bazar Patrika* 23 November 1905), at the College Square meeting of 13 May 1906 (*Bengalee*, 15 May 1906), at a reception to Tilak (*Ibid.*, 8 June 1906), at a big Muslim rally at Basirhat (*Ibid.*, 1 July 1906), at a sympathy meeting for the imprisoned Liakat Husain (*Ibid.*, 4 April 1908), and at Memari in Burdwan district (*Ibid.*, 3 May 1908).

101. Abul Kasem attended the Faridpur Provincial Conference in September 1911—*Home Political Progs. B, October 1911* n. 112-113.

rendered the organization largely ineffective.¹⁰² Guznavi and Rasul were extremely prominent as Swadeshi agitators from the early days of the boycott movement. The *Bengalee* named them as the two leading Swadeshi Muslims on 1 October 1905; six years later theirs were the two Muslim names to adorn a 'rakhi-bandhan' appeal—the last before the abrogation of the Partition.¹⁰³ A Calcutta police report dated 21 September 1905 described Guznavi as "the Principal Agent, sent round to the Mahomedan shopkeepers" to win them for the boycott; "he specially worked upon the English made Boot-importers in Chandni Chowk, who are a large community of Eastern Bengal men all of Mymensingh".¹⁰⁴ Guznavi became Treasurer of the Bengal Mohammedan Association.¹⁰⁵ Abdur Rasul, described in another early police report, as "the leading spirit of the small Muhammedan party which has joined the agitation",¹⁰⁶ hailed from Comilla; his house at 14 Royd Street was the chief meeting-place of the Bengal Mohammedan Association, of which he was first President and then Secretary.¹⁰⁷ At the Calcutta Congress he was one of the very small group of Muslims who, somewhat hesitantly, inclined towards the Extremists,¹⁰⁸ and his call at the Berhampore Provincial Conference for a boycott of honorary posts earned him the warm praise of Brahmobandhab Upadhyay's *Sandhya* and *Swaraj*.¹⁰⁹

The other Swadeshi Muslim leaders were men of humbler origin;

102. As Mujibur Rahaman, the Joint Secretary of the Association complained at its first annual meeting on 15 December 1907. Abul Kasem was dropped from the list of office-bearers for the second year. *Mussalman*, 20 December 1907.

103. *Rakhibandhan Appeal* for 30 Aswin 1318 [17 October 1911], printed at the Samya Press—*Private Papers of Krishnakumar Mitra*, (obtained through the courtesy of Sri Sukumar Mitra)

104. Halliday to Carlyle, 21 September 1905—*Home Public Progs. B October 1905*, n. 115.

105. *Mussalman*, 7 December 1906, 20 December 1907.

106. *Report on the Agitation against the Partition of Bengal* (25 January 1906), Para 51 *Home Public Progs. A June 1906*, n. 175.

107. *Mussalman*, 7 December 1906, 20 December 1907

108. *Diary of G. S. Khaparde*, 31 December 1907 (National Archives).

109. *Sandhya*, 1 April 1907—*RNP(B: for Week ending 6 April 1907. Swaraj*, 24 Chaitra 1313.

invariably described in official sources as paid agents of the Hindus, denounced by the separatist *Mihir-O-Sudhakar* as "all in receipt of pay, hired speakers; all sham",¹¹⁰ they yet remained an almost ubiquitous feature of nationalist meetings throughout our period. Din Muhammed was a recent convert from Hinduism (his original name was Monoranjan Ganguli) who was connected, like many nationalist-minded Muslims, with the Anti-Circular Society. His visit to Jessore in August 1906 infused new life into the movement in that district, and an official report makes the very unusual admission that at meetings addressed by him, "Muhammedans not only took part but actually preponderated."¹¹¹ We hear about him addressing meeting at Ranaghat, Gobardanga, and Dinajpur.¹¹² Dedar Bux, a Calcutta teacher, had addressed a letter to the *Bengalee* on 15 September 1905 calling for unity between Hindus and Muslims, which he said would bring about a combination of intelligence with strength. He soon became a regular Swadeshi orator, addressing numerous meetings in Calcutta, visiting Tamluk, Bagnan, Rajshahi and Malda in the early months of 1907,¹¹³ and often accompanying Surendranath to conferences in the districts.¹¹⁴ Closely associated with the Moderates, Dedar Bux was appointed a "preacher" by the Hooghly-Howrah District Association dominated by them in March 1908.¹¹⁵ Next year he moved the boycott

110 *Mihir-O-Sudhakar*, 21 June 1907—*RNP(B)* for Week ending 29 June 1907.

111 *Report on the Anti-Partition and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal* (7 September 1906), Para 12—*Home Public Progs B* October 1906 n. 13. The Anti-Circular Society elected Din Muhammed as a delegate to the Barisal and Bethampore Provincial Conferences—*Bengalee*, 13 April 1906, 20 March 1907

112 *Abstract of Reports from Bengal during first half of February 1907—Home Public Progs A* April 1907 n. 207-210 *Bengalee*, 4 November 1906; *Bande Mataram*, 18 June 1907.

113 *Home Public Progs A* February 1907 n. 265, April 1907, n. 207-210, June 1907 n. 227-229

114. Dedar Bux accompanied Surendranath to Kushtia and Sirajgunj in February 1907, to the Rajshahi and Mymensingh Conferences the following April, and to the stormy Midnapur District Conference in December 1907. *Bengalee*, 24 February and 1 May 1907; *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, 12 December 1907.

115. Along with 3 Hindus—the Association promising to bear their travel expenses. *Bengalee*, 3 April 1908.

resolution at the Hooghly Provincial Conference,¹¹⁶ and he seems to have acted also as a kind of agent for Aswinicoomar Banerji in Calcutta Corporation politics.¹¹⁷ Hedayet Bux, a teacher from Dacca, and Moulvi Monirazzaman, who belonged to the editorial staff of the pro-nationalist Muslim weekly *Soltan*, figured in a list of Swadeshi orators against whom the Government of East Bengal and Assam wanted to take action in May 1907.¹¹⁸ Syed Abu Muhammad Ismail Hussain Siraji of Serajgunj, described in the official record with more venom than good taste as “the grandson of a constable of police who married a prostitute”,¹¹⁹ was actually a distinguished Swadeshi poet¹²⁰ who was beaten up by his pro-Partition co-religionists in October 1906¹²¹ but went on writing patriotic verses, addressing meetings, and even attending volunteer rallies.¹²² And in sheer energy and zeal there were few Hindu

116. *Government of Bengal to Government of India (Home)*, No. 1889 PD of 20 September 1909—*Home Political Progs. B* November 1909, n. 104

117. Dedar Bux to A. C. Banerji, 5 August and 6 August 1908. Another letter, dated 6 July 1908, is rather unpleasantly fulsome in its praise of the Hindus: “I am exceedingly thankful to receive your favour of date. It is gratifying to think that though a poor man I am not forgotten by our great Swadeshi leaders. May Heaven prolong their lives for our country's good. Had the community I belong to have been able to realize the fact that our elder brethren the Hindus are solely actuated by sincere and disinterested motives to give them a lift, the happy and much desired union between the two communities would have speedily been formed. But alas! this backwardness in consequence of the want of education has made them blind to their own interest”. *Private Papers of A. C. Banerji*, (obtained through the courtesy of Sri Arani Banerji).

118. *Mihir-O-Sudhakar*, 21 June 1907—*op. cit. Bengalee*, 18 May 1906. *Government of E. Bengal and Assam to Government of India (Home)* No. 14C of 14 May 1907—*Home Public Progs. A* June 1907, n. 117.

119. *Fortnightly Report from Eastern Bengal and Assam* No. 1847, 7 December 1906, Para 4—*Home Public Progs. A* January 1907 n. 262.

120. Soumendra Gangopadhyay, *Swadeshi Andolan-O Bangla Sahitya* (Calcutta, 1960), p. 253.

121. *Bengalee*, 21 October 1906. The official record predictably dismissed the incident as “insignificant”. *Fortnightly Report from Eastern Bengal and Assam*, No. 228 M., 5 November 1906—*Home Public Progs. December 1906* n. 148.

122. Thus Siraji attended an athletic display by volunteers at Patipukur (North Calcutta)—*Swaraj*, 10 Chaitra 1313 (March 1907).

orators who could match Abul Husain of Hooghly and Abdul Gafur the ex-teacher of Persian of Batajor (the home-village of Aswinikumar Dutt).¹²³ We hear of them addressing meetings in Nadia, Dinajpur, Pabna, Tippera, Dacca, Bakargunj, Noakhali, Chittagong, Burdwan, Mymensingh, Diamond-Harbour—in fact, in virtually all parts of Bengal, exhorting Jamalpur and Asansol strikers and Barisal peasants alike to rally to the Swadeshi cause.¹²⁴ Gafur in particular caused alarm in official circles by his militant speeches, referring to the British ill-treatment of the Sultan of Turkey and urging his audiences “to learn lathi-play as they would not be allowed to use guns”; he even reportedly spoke of driving “those uneducated foreigners back to the other side of the seas”.¹²⁵

But the agitator who towered above them all was the elderly Muslim from Patna, Liakat Hussain—“a lion amongst men”, the *Sandhya* once described him to be.¹²⁶ Already fairly well-known for his charitable work—in May 1901 he had started a ‘Society for the support of widows and the helpless in India’ with some support from Syed Amir Hussain and Bilgrami—Liakat Hussain on 4 August 1905 wrote a letter to Surendranath conveying his “best sympathies on the severe calamity” of Partition, and suggesting a boycott as the only means of “repairing the heavy loss sustained thereby”.¹²⁷ In the coming months Liakat Hussain became an extremely active member of the Anti-Circular Society, functioning as the leader of

123. Deposition of S. Muhamniad Husain, ex-Special Sub-Registrar of Barisal, before R. Hughes-Buller, 12 June 1907—*Home Political Progs. A February 1908* n. 42.

124. *Home Public Deposit September 1906* n. 5; *Progs. B October 1906* n. 131; *Progs A December 1906* n. 144-148, n. 310-311; *February 1907* n. 265; *April 1907* n. 207-210; *May 1907* n. 155-156 *Bengalee* 7 July 1906, 30-31 August and 5 September 1906, 1 May and 3 May 1908

125. *Fortnightly Report from Eastern Bengal and Assam. No. 511T, 14 April 1907* (Gafur's speeches at Dinajpur and Chittagong)—*Home Public Progs. A May 1907* n. 155.

126. *Sandhya*, 28 September 1907—*RNP (B) for Week ending 5 October 1907*.

127. *Facts about Liakat Hussain gleaned from his papers*, pp. 15-16—enclosed with Telegram No. 1728, 15 July 1907, from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State. *Home Political Progs. A February 1908* n. 43. The early date of Liakat Hussain's letter to Surendranath is interesting—the boycott slogan was publicly adopted by the leaders only on 7 August 1905.

Procession Party which raised funds through street-singing every evening, and trying to organize a 'Swadeshi Volunteer Corps' for physical training.¹²⁸ He also helped to raise "large sums of money" for the famine-relief work being conducted under Aswinikumar Dutta and Ambicacharan Majumdar in Barisal and Faridpur.¹²⁹ In the summer of 1906 the official record describes him as very active in the East Indian Railway strike—"he addressed several meetings of strikers at Asansol and Jharria and organized a 'volunteer' corps at the former place".¹³⁰ After the winter of 1906-07, Liakat Hussain broke sharply with the Moderates¹³¹—he was now to be found addressing meetings jointly with Pal and Brahmobandhab Upadhyay,¹³² and put up for a time at the *Sandhya* offices.¹³³ He rushed to Mymensingh after the riots there in the summer of 1907, and the police later on found the draft of a pamphlet in his handwriting denouncing the Muslims who were "assaulting the Hindus for nothing and committing outrages on the Hindu women" as "kafirs" who "according to the Hadis and Kuran . . . doomed to suffer the pangs of hell."¹³⁴ What alarmed the Government most of all was Liakat Hussain's Urdu pamphlet, published on 3 June 1907, which tried to rouse Muslim religious sentiment against the British in a manner which must have recalled in the minds of the

128. *Bangalee*, 16 June, 19 June, 8 November 1906

129. 'Facts about Liakat Hussain . . .', *op. cit.*, p. 19

130. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

131. *Ibid.* The Anti-Circular Society delegates to the Bethampore Provincial Conference (March 1907) included six Muslims—Abul Husain, Din Muhammad, Dedar Bux, Ebrahim Husain, Abul Majid, and Abdul Gifur but not Liakat Hussain. *Bangalee*, 20 March 1907.

132. *Home Public Progs A* February 1907 n. 152-154 *Bande Mataram*, 1 July 1907.

133. *Sandhya*, 28 September 1907.

134. 'Facts about Liakat Hussain . . .', *op. cit.*, p. 18. The Hindus who could rise above their loyalties to an equivalent degree numbered precious few in 1907—or later on.

latter the days of the Wahhabi agitation.¹³⁵ When Liakat Hussain and Gafur came to Barisal a few days later apparently with the intention of distributing this pamphlet, they were promptly arrested, tried for sedition, and given heavy jail sentences (3 years r. i. for Liakat). The former was also prosecuted in the autumn of 1907 in Calcutta for delivering allegedly incendiary speeches.¹³⁶

The oft-repeated charge that the Swadeshi Muslim agitators were all paid agents perhaps requires a little discussion. The official sources betray a pretty evident bias,¹³⁷ and men like Guznavi and Rasul were obviously as well-off as most Hindu leaders—but in the case of some of the others there are bits of independent evidence as to the existence of some kind of clash connection. During the EIR strike, Surendranath sent the following note to A. C. Banerji on 31 August 1906 : “Abul Husain will go up to Asansole. Kindly send his fare per bearer (Rs. 10)”.¹³⁸ The *Nabasakti* while praising Liakat Hussain mentioned in passing the fact that at one time the Moderates had paid him a “small allowance . . . out of the National Fund”.¹³⁹ But travel allowances and payments for whole-time work are after all hardly uncommon in modern politics, and these

135. ‘*Musalman dunya ka waste mustaq aur kafir mat ho*’ ‘Musalmans don’t go astray and don’t turn infidels for the sake of the world’ In form this was a refutation of an article published in the Bombay daily *Sultan-ul-Akbar* which had tried to show that loyalty to the existing Government was a Koranic duty Liakat replied that “it would be erroneous . . . to obey an order of the ruler of the time which is antagonistic to God and the Prophet”, and quoted the following verse from the Sura-e-Maida: “Oh believers in God don’t make the Jews and the Christians your friends”. Translation of Liakat Hussain’s pamphlet, contained in No. 167C, 19 June 1907 from *Officiating Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Government of India (Home)—Home Political Progs. A February 1908* n. 42.

136. *Home Political Progs. A August 1908* n. 24

137. Swadeshi Muslims are invariably dismissed as people of low birth and men “without any position or status in their own community” [*Fortnightly Report from E Bengal and Assam*, No. 164T, 7 December 1906—*Home Public Progs. A January 1907* n. 262]. As the most usual charge against the Congress from the days of Dufferin had been that it consisted of a “microscopic minority” of upper-class babus without contact with the masses, there is obviously here an instance of heads I-win-tails-you-lose.

138. *Private Papers of Aswinicoomar Banerji*.

139. *Nabasakti*, 8 November 1907—*RNP (B) for Week ending 16 November 1907*.

are seldom regarded as evidence that the men receiving them are mere mercenaries. There were paid Hindu Swadeshi preachers, too, as for example in Barisal.¹⁴⁰ If this was not yet a very common feature, that indicates not necessarily greater sincerity, but perhaps only the still largely upper-class character of Swadeshi Hindu politics. The British, so contemptuous in their descriptions of these Muslims, showed in their actions a very acute awareness of the latter's importance—apart from the hounding down of Liakat Hussain, there is the little-known fact that six Swadeshi Muslims (Abul Husain, Abdul Gafur, Din Muhammad, Ismail Husain Siraji, *Hedayet Bux*, *Monirazzaman*) shared with Bipinchandra Pal the honour of figuring in the first list of proposed prosecutions for sedition drawn up by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.¹⁴¹ The conduct of Liakat Hussain, who broke with the Moderates only to join the Extremists, and unflinchingly underwent three years rigorous imprisonment, is hardly that of a mercenary; and could a mere paid agent have composed the stirring patriotic verse of Ismail Husain Siraji?¹⁴²

A glimpse into the minds of the Muslims who supported the Swadeshi movement—with or without qualification—is provided by two weeklies, the English-language *Mussalman* and the Bengali *Soltan*. The *Mussalman*, owned by a limited company headed by Rasul and Guznavi,¹⁴³ was started on 7 December 1906 with Abul

140. Annual Report of Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti—*Bengalee*, 14 September 1906.

141. *Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Government of India (Home)*, No. 14C, 14 May 1907—*Home Public Progs. A June 1907* n. 117.

142. I quote a sample from *Akangkha* [Heart's Desire], published in the *Swaraj* of 3 Chaitra 1313 [March 1907] :—

“—Ami chahina sabhyata, (bhandamir katha)
 Chahina sundara besh,
 Ami chahi shudhu ei adhikar,
 Bharat amar desh/
 Ami chahina darshan chahina kabya
 Chahi shudhu ami ei
 Bharatbarsha bharatbashir
 Para adhikar nei/”

143. List of English and Foreign newspapers published in Bengal, revised upto 31 December 1907. (G. C. Denham, Special Branch, 13 March, 1908)—*Annual Report on Indian Papers, Volume IV*, pp. 121-126.

Kasem as its nominal editor—but the work of actually conducting it seems to have fallen mainly on the shoulders of Mujibur Rahaman. A part-proprietor of the *Bengalee* is said to have advanced a loan of Rs. 3,500/- to help start the paper.¹⁴⁴ While the *Mussalman* often broadly supported Surendranath's political line—thus it was critical of the *Bande Mataram* and blamed Tilak for the Surat split¹⁴⁵—it did not hesitate to take up an independent stand, despite its alleged financial dependence, on issues involving what it considered to be the legitimate interests and sentiments of the Muslims. The *Mussalman* supported Swadeshi and boycott—which it argued, would benefit above all the weavers, among whom Muslim 'jolhas' outnumbered Hindu 'tantis'¹⁴⁶—but was much more cautious on the Partition issue,¹⁴⁷ no doubt because it realized most of its educated co-religionists were still greatly in love with the idea of a Muslim-majority province. On the Council Reforms issue, the *Mussalman* at one time came to differ quite sharply from the Hindu nationalists.¹⁴⁸ Mujibur Rahaman, however, personally denounced the Muslim craving for Government jobs,¹⁴⁹ and the *Mussalman* repeatedly condemned those educated Muslims who were ashamed of their Bengali origins and culture and tried to promote the Urdu medium. "Bengalee is the mother-tongue and vernacular of the Bengalees—be they Hindus or Mohamedans", it unequivocally declared in an editorial on 21 December 1906.¹⁵⁰ But what worried and embarrassed most the men conducting the *Mussalman*—like other nationalist

144. *Fortnightly Report from Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, No. 291T, 12 January 1907, Para 7—Home Public Progs. A February 1907 n. 153.

145. *Mussalman*, 14 December 1906, 3 May 1907, 17 January 1908.

146. *Ibid.*, 26 April 1907. This by the way was a very common Swadeshi Muslim argument—Rasul used it at the Barisal Provincial Conference. Priyanath Guha, *Yojna-Bhanga* [Calcutta, 1907] p. 39.

147. "There may be two opinions on the advisability of Bengal Partition, but a Bengali who opposes Swadeshism or use of country-made clothes must not brag of patriotism". *Mussalman*, 26 April 1907

148. Annual Report on Indian Papers in the Bengal Presidency (1909)—*Annual Report on Indian Papers*, Volume IV, p. 156.

149. *Bengalee*, 14 November 1906.

150. Another editorial, dated 13 March 1908, proudly announced that "We Bengali Mussalmans are not ashamed to say that our vernacular is Bengali".

minded Muslims were the numerous instances of Hindu assumptions of superiority, all the more irritating for being largely unconscious, which still vitiated so much of Bengal's social life. Mujibur Rahaman, in a very fine article written for the *Hindustan Review* and reprinted in the *Mussalman* of 13 November 1908,¹⁵¹ draws up a formidable catalogue of such grievances even while reiterating the need for unity and denouncing those "educated Muhammadans in India who consider themselves foreigners". Hindus ostentatiously throw away the water in their "hookkas" [hubble-bubble] when they meet a Muslim; the sacrifice of cows horrifies them, and their zamindars often deal harshly with Muslim peasants observing Bakar-Id—yet aerated water and sugar prepared by Muslims are accepted without the least objection, and no one objects to the daily slaughter of "thousands of the bovine animals . . . by professional butchers in almost all the towns in the country". Hindus do not always accept even educated Muslims as their social equals, and their literature is full of abuse of the 'Yavanas'. To the plea that the latter term means no more than a non-Hindu, Mujibur Rahaman replies unanswerably that the word 'native' is also in strict etymology quite unobjectionable. All these things, he concludes, are no doubt "small matters"—but "It is the agglomeration of small matter, that constitutes a gigantic thing." Essays like these help to explain why so many Muslim politicians—from Syed Ahmed to Jinnah—after starting as good nationalists have ended as apologists and advocates of communalism.

The *Soltan* stood for a rather different and more qualified kind of support for nationalism. Emphasizing quite as much as any communalist the special position and claims of the Muslims, often sharply critical of certain aspects of Hindu behaviour¹⁵², it at the

151. *Indian Unity: As Evidenced by Hindu-Mussalman Relations in Bengal*.

152. Thus it deplored the use by Hindus of terms like 'Yavana' and 'Nere' (24 June 1904), was critical of festivals in honour of Shivaji or Sitaram (7 October 1904, 10 February 1905, 8 June 1906), and repeatedly denounced Hindu zamindari oppression of Muslim tenants on the cow-slaughter or other issues (23 March 1906, 4 January 1907, 22 March 1907, 3 May 1907, 9 August 1907). *RNP (B) for Weeks ending 2 July 1904, 15 October 1904, 18 February 1905, 16 June 1906, 31 March 1906, 12 January 1907, 6 April 1907, 11 May 1907, 17 August 1907*.

same time totally rejected the pro-British political line being put forward from Aligarh and Dacca. The *Soltan* urged its readers to follow the Hindu example of self-reliance in economic life and education: "Nothing but self-help and self-dependence can make a people really great . . . We should on no account cast aside indigenous arts and industries. Neither the Hindus nor the English will be able to effect our improvement . . . Stand on your own legs and strive after higher education".¹⁵³ It was a warm supporter of Swadeshi and boycott, though in part, it seems, because it felt that otherwise the Hindus would steal a march over the Muslims;¹⁵⁴ and it also advised participation in the Congress.¹⁵⁵ The *Soltan* was notable, too, for its militant Pan-Islamism; it published articles on the age-old conflict between Islam and Christianity, printed poems (including some by Ismail Husain Siraji) calling for a revivalist campaign against the West, and hailed the nationalist movements of Persia, Egypt and Turkey.¹⁵⁶ It thus represents a kind of a link between the Swadeshi Muslims and the Khilafat movement of the succeeding decade.

The nationalist-minded Muslims seem to have worked mainly as

153. *Soltan*, 13 September 1907--RNP (B) for Week ending 21 September 1907.

154. "if the Musalmans give up Swadeshi in a spirit of antagonism to the Hindus or for fear of incurring the displeasure of the English, all the arts and industries of India will be monopolized by the Hindus, and the Musalman community, which is sufficiently poor even now will become poorer still". *Soltan*, 3 January 1908--RNP(B) for week ending 11 January 1908. The passage occurred in a polemic with *Mihir-O-Sudhakar* and it is just possible that the *Soltan* was deliberately emphasizing this selfish reason so as to influence the supporters of that blatantly communal weekly.

155. *Soltan*, 21 December 1906, 24 January 1908--RNP (B) for Week ending 29 December 1906, 1 February 1908. It argued that Muslims by participating in the Congress would be able to block the passage of resolutions detrimental to their interests and also to focus attention on issues like the treatment of muslims in South Africa.

156. *Soltan*, 15 June 1906, 9 November 1906, 12 April 1907, 19 July 1907, 22 November 1907--RNP (B) for Weeks ending 23 June 1906, 17 November 1906, 20 April 1907, 27 July 1907, 30 November 1907. An official report noted that the *Soltan* "has made mischievous appeals to the Pan-Islamic and anti-Christian spirit, and bids for sympathy with the extreme nationalist party in Egypt and Persia". *Fortnightly Report from the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, No 231C, 8/9 July 1907—*Home Political Progs. A August 1907* n. 4.

individuals, and the one or two attempts they made to give a stable organizational form to their activities were not particularly impressive. Liakat Hussain's proposed *Anjuman-i-Islamia* which the *Bengalee* welcomed on 4 April 1906 was apparently stillborn. The Bengal Muhammadan Association was set up in Calcutta on 3 November 1906 with the purpose of rallying "educated Mussulmans scattered over the province" behind a programme which emphasized "that the true interest of the Muhammadans lies in the growth of friendly relations between the different sections of the Indian community".¹⁵⁷ A year later the Association's Joint Secretary Mujibur Rahaman admitted that a peace appeal before Bakr-Id had been virtually the sole contribution so far of the organization to public life, and the annual meeting dispersed after electing office-bearers and delegates to the Congress and passing vaguely-worded resolutions on communal amity and on "steps" (left undefined) to stop "dramas and plays containing things offensive to the Musalmans".¹⁵⁸ The Indian Musalman Association set up on 31 December 1906 at a meeting in Rasul's house was probably even more of a paper organization, though its office-bearers included a number of men already-well known or destined to fame—Nawab Syed Mohomed of Madras as President, Syed Hyder Reza of Delhi as one of the Secretaries (the other being Rasul), and as Vice-President, Muhammed Ali Jinnah.¹⁵⁹

This organizational weakness was of course no more than an index to the limited appeal of Swadeshi ideas on the Muslims of Bengal. A contemporary diarist noted that "Educated Mohomedans, who are almost all in Government service, hope for the continuance of the Partition, for it has become the declared policy of the East Bengal Government to prefer Mahomedans to Hindus in Government service . . .".¹⁶⁰ Separatist ideas and ambitions fil-

157. *Abstract of Reports from Bengal during first half of November 1906—Home Public Progs. A January 1907 n. 262-263.*

158. *Mussalman*, 20 December 1907.

159. *Ibid.*, 11 January 1907.

160. *Unpublished Diary of Gyanchandra Benerji*, 17 October 1906 (obtained through the courtesy of Shri Shyamalendu Banerji).

tered down through the local Anjumans dominated by orthodox 'mullas', and merged with the strong currents of anti-Hindu revivalism already at work in Bengali Muslim rural society. As Fraser told Minto, "Ignorant and uneducated Mahomedans follow their leaders more readily than Hindus", provided these leaders "co-operate with the Imams and leaders in the mosques".¹⁶¹ The peasant, as a rule, whether Hindu or Muslim, remained politically inert, but in certain areas he was stirred into action against the Hindu bhadralok gentry, and riots took place--communal in form very largely agrarian in content.

Muslim communalism was thus developing on two levels. Attention has generally been focussed on the activities of the Muslim elite--the Simla Deputation of 1 October 1906, the foundation of the Muslim League three months later at Dacca, the achievement of separate electorates in 1908-1909.¹⁶² The corresponding developments at the provincial level in Bengal are also tolerably well-known. The scheme for a new Muslim-majority province got the enthusiastic support of Nawab Salimulla of Dacca and the *Mihir-o-Sudhakar* owned by Nawab Ali Chaudhuri from the very beginning.¹⁶³ The Standing Committee elected by the Town Hall meeting of 7 August 1905 included not a single Muslim among its 23 Dacca representatives,¹⁶⁴ and even at the height of that first Swadeshi upsurge pro-Partition Muslim meetings were being held--at Faridpur on 31 July, and at Calcutta organized by the Anjuman-i-Khadam-ul-Islam on

161. Fraser to Minto, 28 March 1907--*Minto Papers*, M980.

162. For four recent accounts of these developments, all based mainly on the private papers of officials, see S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement* (1964), Chapters II, V; M. D. Das, *India under Morley and Minto* (London, 1964), Chapters V, VI; Amales Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge* (1967), Chapter V; and S. A. Wolpert, *Morley and India 1906-1910* (California, 1967).

163. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 15 February 1904 reported that a meeting in Dacca on 9 February arranged by Salimulla and attended by 95 persons (mostly his relatives or dependents) had demanded an enlarged scheme for a new province; nine days later, Curzon in his Dacca speech dropped the first public hint that the Government was thinking on similar lines. The *Mihir-O-Sudhakar* welcomed the scheme on 5 February 1904--*RNP(B) for Week ending 13 February 1904*.

164. *Bengalee*, 8 August 1905. There were altogether 24 Muslims in the 226-member standing Committee.

10 August.¹⁶⁵ The inaugural meeting at Dacca on 16 October 1905 of the Mohammadan Provincial Association—with a subscription of Re. 1/- a month and membership restricted to men “of social position and dignity”¹⁶⁶—was apparently not much of a success.¹⁶⁷ But in the following months local Anjumans, old or newly established, busied themselves arranging receptions for Fuller, and then organizing meetings and sending telegrams condemning his removal—a campaign which, Minto informed Morley, “as long as it does not get out of control . . . will, I hope, be very useful to us”.¹⁶⁸ Two sets of meetings were held in many East Bengal towns on the first anniversary of the Partition—the division often being “strictly on religious lines.”¹⁶⁹

By itself, this movement of Muslim aristocrats (plus a few lawyers and journalists),¹⁷⁰ would probably not have become particularly formidable in Bengal. The Muslim upper-class here still rather abjectly depended on upper India for political leadership. The Simla Deputation kept entirely silent on the Partition and Fuller issues, and though Salimulla had originally suggested the plan for an all-Indian Muslim “confederacy”, the Muslim League established its headquarters in Aligarh. As late as on 26 December 1908, the *Moslem Chronicle* was complaining that “the few weekly papers we own have no weight, and the few associations that we have suffer from sleeping sickness”. The Muslim League, it regretfully noted, had not yet even a provincial branch in Western Bengal, and in any case its membership fee was “prohibitive”—though this rather timid and old-fashioned weekly hastened to add that “we do not want it

165. *Mihir-O-Sudhakar*, 11 August 1905, 18 August 1905; *RNP (B) for weeks ending 19 and 26 August 1905*.

166. *Ibid* , 27 October 1905—*RNP (B) for week ending 4 November 1905*.

167. *Bengalee*, 22 October 1905.

168. Minto to Morley, 22 August 1906—*Minto Papers*, M 1006.

169. *Abstract of Reports from Eastern Bengal and Assam during first half of October 1906—Home Public Progs. A December 1906 n. 310-311*.

170. The Bengal members of the first Provincial Committee of the Muslim League included, apart from Salimulla, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, and Amir Husain, the barrister Abdur Rahim, two Vakils—Shamsul Huda and Sirajul Islam, and Abdul Hamid, the Editor of the *Moslem Chronicle*. S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto*, p. 224.

to be a democratic duma. . ."¹⁷¹ It is fairly obvious that the Muslims owed their weighted Council representation and separate electorates mainly to a coincidence between their communal ambition and British imperial strategy; the Government *volte face* on the Partition issue in 1911 left them angry but helpless—as Hardinge assured Crewe, the Nawab of Dacca could do nothing, as he was "hopelessly in debt to the Government of India".¹⁷²

What made communalism dangerous in Bengal was the incongruous Muslim combination of aristocratic leadership with anti-landlord demagogery—a combination made possible by the peculiar social fact of there being, in the words of the *Moslem Chronicle* "many districts in Bengal where no large zamindar is a Mohamedan, and in which even petty landowners of the Mohamedan persuasion are but a small minority."¹⁷³ The *Mihir-O-Sudhakar* repeatedly denounced Hindu zamindari oppression,¹⁷⁴ combined calls for proportionate representation of Muslims in local bodies with suggestions for credit societies and revised interest laws to free the peasant from the clutches of the 'mahajan',¹⁷⁵ and attacked Hindu rice merchants for buying cheap from the producer and selling dear.¹⁷⁶ Its circulation touched 4000 in 1908—as compared to 1500 of *Soltan* and 500 of *Mussalman*.¹⁷⁷ On 25 November 1906, a Muhammadan Vigilance Committee was set up in Calcutta with Amir Husain and Sirajul Islam as its leading spirits; its purpose was to establish contacts with district Muslim associations and Anjumans and so help to prevent "Muhammedan tenantry being ill-treated by Hindu landlords".¹⁷⁸ The *Bengalee* accused the Vigilance Committee of making

171. *Moslem Chronicle*, 28 November, 26 December 1908.

172. Hardinge to Crewe, 24 August 1911 Quoted in Tripathi, *Extremist Challenge*, p. 106

173. The Farce of Hindu-Muslim Union—*Moslem Chronicle*, 26 December 1908.

174. *Mihir-O-Sudhakar*, 15 September 1905, 15 March 1907, 7 February 1908—*RNP(B) for weeks ending 30 September 1905, 30 March 1907, 15 February 1908*.

175. *Ibid.*, 29 September 1905—*RNP(B) for week ending 7 October 1905*

176. *Ibid.*, 24 August 1906—*RNP(B) for week ending 1 September 1906*.

177. *Annual Report on Indian Papers, Volume IV*, pp. 121, 129.

178. *Fortnightly Report from Bengal*, No. FAR5, 15 December 1906. *Abstract of Reports from Bengal during second half of November 1906—Home Public Progs. A Jan. 1907 n. 263, February 1907 n. 152-154.*

“groundless statements . . . against Hindu landlords”;¹⁷⁹ the *Mus-salman* in its first number (7 December 1906) rather weakly called the formation of such an organization a “mistake”, since the Government was there to protect the tenants. The social inhibitions betrayed by such statements were certainly natural, but non-the-less disastrous.

III. The Riots of 1906-1907

The first signs of mounting communal tension in certain districts of Bengal became apparent in the early months of 1906. A Bengal Government report dated 7 April 1906¹⁸⁰ spoke of Hindus and Muslims deciding to sit separately at the Suri Bar Library in Bir-bhum, described an assault on a Muslim priest in the village of Magurghona in Jessore—here a possible riot was averted by the timely intervention of Anti-Circular Society leaders from Calcutta¹⁸¹—and noted that in Nadia and elsewhere “travelling maulvis” were “making efforts to improve the condition of their poorer co-religionists, the first result of which is the refusal of the labourers to go on performing customary menial offices for the Hindus”.¹⁸² The *Charu-Mihir* of Mymensingh repeatedly complained that the “illiterate low class cultivators” of the district were harbouring “wild ideas” to the effect that “they should pay rents at the low rates which obtained years ago and not at the high rates which obtained at present”. Another issue of the *Charu-Mihir* spoke of Muslim bargadars [share-croppers] “refusing to work under Hindus, and cultivate lands of which the latter are proprietors”, and the circulation of a communal pamphlet entitled *Nawab Sahaber Subichar* [Justice done by the Nawab Saheb (of Dacca)] was reported by

179. *Bengalee*, 28 November 1906.

180. *Government of Bengal to Government of India (Home)*, No. 975P, 7 April 1906—*Home Public Progs. A* June 1906 n. 179.

181. On 14 February a 10,000 strong peace meeting was organized at Magurghona, with Sachindraprasad Bose, Abul Kasem, Abul Husain, and Din Mohammed among the speakers. *Ibid*; also *Annual Report of Anti-Circular Society, Bengalee*, 9 November 1906.

182. *Report of 7 April 1906, op. cit.*

the same newspaper in the middle of March.¹⁸³ The first serious disturbances took place in the Iswargunj and Nandail police stations of Mymensingh district in late April and early May 1906. Led by the influential local preacher Moulvi Samiruddin and a recent convert named Dinesh Neogi, crowds went about the region trying to persuade Muslim servants to desert their Hindu masters, and raiding bazars to 'rescue' Muslim prostitutes. The house of Harischandra Sarkar, a landholder of Pubail who had tried to offer active resistance to Samiruddin's efforts to take away his Muslim servants, was raided on 6 May, but otherwise, as a Hindu deputy magistrate reported on 25 May, "the mob, though well able to do so, did not lay their hands on any one's property. In the case of prostitutes alone, they were carried off property and all. Clearly, therefore, the object of the mob was not plunder, but what according to the Maulvis, religion demanded of them".¹⁸⁴ There was still considerable panic "among the smaller talukdars, the agents of absentee landlords, the shop-keepers, and other Hindu residents",—till the police reinforcements from Dacca suppressed the disturbances, 40 being sent up for trial in a total of 22 cases.¹⁸⁵

Far more violent and serious were the disturbances of 1907. In the winter and early spring of 1906-07 there were frequent reports of mullas—agents of Salimulla, according to the nationalists¹⁸⁶—spreading the separatist message through the East Bengal countryside; and communal tracts appeared, like the *Swajati Andolan* and the notorious *Lal Istahar* [Red Pamphlet], calling for a 'swajati' movement in which the Muslims would totally boycott the

183. *Charu Mthir*, 23 January, 27 February, 13 March 1906—*RNP(B) for weeks ending 3 February, 10 March and 24 March 1906*.

184. *Report of Deputy Magistrate Debendraprasad Roy to the District Magistrate of Mymensingh*, 25 May 1906, Paras 3-6, 10. *Home Public Progs. A July 1906* n. 124.

185. *Dacca Commissioner Le Mesurier to Chief Secretary, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assom*, No. 2 *TJ*, Camp Barisal, 6 June 1906, Para 4. *Ibid.*

186. Thus the *Hitavarta* of 3 February 1907 accused the Dacca Muslims of spreading the communal message in East Bengal towns and villages. *RNP(B) for week ending 9 February 1907*.

Hindus.¹⁸⁷ In December 1906, an official report spoke of Muslim emissaries in Jessore instructing labourers, nurses, midwives and cartmen not to serve Hindus, and four months later, movement for calling out Muslim servants of Hindus was said to be spreading in Pabna and Dinajpur.¹⁸⁸ A visit of Salimulla to Comilla on 4 March 1907 sparked off serious clashes when a Muslim procession, enraged by what it considered to be an insult to their leader,¹⁸⁹ sacked Hindu shops in the bazar and beat up some passers-by. Comilla was an Extremist stronghold, and with the District Magistrate seemingly ignoring Hindu complaints, the latter hit back strongly. Volunteers were called up from Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Barisal and Chittagong,¹⁹⁰ the Parsi Secretary of the Nawab was assaulted, and a Muslim shot dead in the streets by a Hindu policeman out of uniform.¹⁹¹ Things quietened down with the arrival of military police and the formation of a joint peace committee by prominent Hindu and Muslim citizens, but the last week of the month saw rioting at the markets of Mogra and Ghatiara (about 30 miles north of Comilla town) in the sub-division of Brahmanbaria. These were apparently provoked by Hindu attempts to enforce the boycott on Muslim shopkeepers, as well as by the spread of rumours about

187. *Sanyukt*, 20 December 1906—*RNP (B) for week ending 29 December 1906* The Red Pamphlet made its first appearance at the Dacca Muslim Educational Conference in December 1906, and was circulating in parts of Rajshahi and in the Kishoreganj sub-division of Mymensingh in April 1907—*Home Political Progs. A July 1907* n. 189. The *Bengalee* of 5 May 1907 reprinted the full text of this pamphlet.

188. *Abstract of Reports for Bengal during first half of December 1906. Fortnightly Report from Eastern Bengal and Assam. No. 444T*, 14 March 1907—*Home Public Progs. A February 1907* n. 265, *April 1907* n. 208

189. A broom had been displayed at a window while the Nawab's procession was passing—the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner thought it to be probably accidental. H. Luson's Report No. 11G, 15 March 1907—*Home Public Progs. A May 1907*, n. 162.

190. *Telegram from Luson to Le Mesurier, Comilla 10 March 1907—Home Public Progs. A May 1907* n. 163

191. *Telegram from Luson to Le Mesurier, Comilla, 8 March 1907; Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State No. 706, 14 March 1907—Home Public Progs. A May 1907* n. 162, 161.

the insult allegedly offered to the Nawab.¹⁹² On 21 April Muslims attacked a 'mela' near Jamalpur (Mymensingh district). A Hindu was drowned while trying to flee, and a Durga image was smashed.¹⁹³ On the night of 27-28 April, there was a clash involving the use of firearms between a group of volunteers (some of whom had come from Calcutta) and the Muslims in Jamalpur town; this was followed by a panicky flight of most Hindu householders.¹⁹⁴ During the first half of May, the disturbances spread over a wide area in the northern part of Jamalpur sub-division, with Dewangunj and Bakshigunj as the chief centers, and there were riots also in the Phulpur region near Mymensingh town.¹⁹⁵ Property, mainly of Hindu landholders, shop-keepers, and Mahajans, was this time the principal target, though there was also considerable destruction of images and some cases of rape and attempted forcible conversion. Casualties, however, were few, as "the rioters appear to have been actuated by a desire to do violence to the property rather than to the persons of the Hindus, and as the Hindus, offered no resistance."¹⁹⁶

The Jamalpur event caused widespread panic, with nationalist newspapers scenting mulla activity in widely scattered parts of Bengal;¹⁹⁷ but actually the riots remained localized, the only disturbances outside Mymensingh and Tippera being at Ekdala 'hat' in Rajshahi and Salonga near Sirajgunj in Pabna, both in the second

192 *H. Luson's Report No. 147, Chittagong 10 April 1907—Home Public Progs. A May 1907 n. 169.*

193 *Le Mesurier to Risley, 29 April 1907, forwarding a note from Dacca Commissioner R. Nathan 23 April 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 13.*

194. *Le Mesurier to Risley, 4 and 6 May 1907—Ibid.*

195. *Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Government of India (Home), No. 374C, 17 August 1907—forwarding a report by R. Nathan, para 15. Home Political Progs. A December 1907 n. 58.*

196 *Ibid.* Apart from the man drowned near Jamalpur, only one Hindu was seriously injured while defending his property near Dewangunj. On the same day a blind Muslim and his guide were killed, and a Muslim had been shot dead at Comilla two months before.

197. During May and June 1907, the *Bandar Mataram* printed reports of such activity from Midnapur, Pabna, Chittagong, Jessore and Nadia. *Bandar Mataram*, 17 May, 21 May, 1 June, 11 June, 28 June 1907.

half of May 1907.¹⁹⁸ The Government, while still remarkably soft as regards the instigators of the riots (the classic example being the letting-off of Ibrahim Khan the publisher of the Red Pamphlet by the Mymensingh Magistrate on the basis of a bond which was "not worth the paper it is written on"),¹⁹⁹ took energetic action against the actual participants, who were of course mostly of lower-class origin. The *Soltan* complained that 300 Muslims were rotting in Rajshahi jails,²⁰⁰ and the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam mentioned 68 arrests in Tippera, 200 at Jamalpur, and 19 at Sirajgunj while giving a very interesting assurance to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce on 28 May 1907 that firm action would be taken for "maintaining the peace during the coming jute season".²⁰¹ The badly-frightened Hindu zamindars of Mymensingh, noted so far for their "very unsatisfactory" political attitude, were now rushing to present welcome addresses to Lieutenant-Governor Hare.²⁰² And lower-class turbulence after all could be a pretty dangerous thing for authority as well, as the Sherpur incident in Jamalpur subdivision on 22 September 1907 indicated. What began as a petty market dispute ended with a violent Muslim mob attacking a police barrack; the latter opened fire in self-defence, but mistakenly using ball instead of buckshot, killed two and injured eight.²⁰³

The riots of 1906-07 set off an acrimonious debate on the question of responsibility. The favourite British theory put the blame largely on the Swadeshi movement. Hindu zamindars in their eagerness to

198. *Fortnightly Report from Eastern Bengal and Assam*, No. 108C, 31 May 1907—*Home Public Progs. A June 1907* n. 229.

199. *Note by H. Adamson*, 26 June 1907, on the release of Ibrahim Khan on 13 June 1907: "I agree that it was most injudicious to drop the case after it had been started, and so far as I can gather from the papers the Magistrate acted ultra vires in taking security, and the bond is not worth the paper it is written on . . . However, the proceedings are proceedings of a court of law, and we as an Executive Government need not give expression to our opinions about them. *Home Pol. Progs. A July 1907* n. 189.

200. *Soltan*, 5 July 1907—*RNP (B) for week ending 13 July 1907*.

201. *Bande Mataram*, 1 June 1907.

202. *Fortnightly Report from Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam* No. 359C, 12 August 1907, Para 1—*Home Political Progs. A September 1907* n. 44.

203. *Home Political Progs. A January 1908*, n. 44-47.

enforce the boycott had coerced Muslim tenants and shopkeepers, and this, it was argued, had led to the violent reaction. That boycott at times involved considerable hardship for the poor is a fact admitted later by Rabindranath,²⁰⁴ and it is confirmed by the nature of many of the Swadeshi cases²⁰⁵ and indirectly by much information coming from unimpeachable nationalist sources.²⁰⁶ But a direct causal link with the riots is a much more controversial matter. It appears from the official record that the Mogra Bazar clash of 23 March 1907 was provided by an attempt to enforce the boycott initiated by Nandakumar Sarkar, the ijaradar of the hat.²⁰⁷ A number of Hindus were convicted in the Jamalpur mela case on the charge of forcibly obstructing the sale of 'bideshi' goods and thus provoking the riot of 21 April 1907.²⁰⁸ But elsewhere an interesting discrepancy is noticeable between the reports of junior officers on the spot and the summarized versions of these transmitted by their superiors to the Government of India or the India Office. Describing the Iswargunj riots of 1906 to Sir Arthur Godley the Under-Secretary of State, Risley placed the pressure by Hindu landlords for boycott as first among the causes;²⁰⁹ the Divisional Commissioner of Dacca categorized interference in the interests of Swadeshi as the "final grievance which decided the raiyats to defy their former masters";²¹⁰ yet the original report of Deputy-Magistrate Debendraprasad Roy on which all the other accounts were presumably based had actually given quite a different

204. *Byadhi O Pratikar* (1907), *Sadhpay* (1908)—Tagore, *Rachanabali*, Vol X, pp. 630, 524.

205. Cf. for instance the Narsingh salt case (December 1905), and the Rajbari salt case (January 1906)—*Swadeshi Cases* (Calcutta, 1906).

206. Cf. for example *Swadeshi at Faridpur—Bengalee* 3 October 1906.

207. *D. O. from the sub-divisional officer of Brahmanbaria to the District Magistrate of Tippera, Akhaura* 27 March 1907—Enclosure III A to Chittagong Commissioner H. Luson's Report No. 147T of 10 April 1907. *Home Public Progs. A* May 1907 n. 169.

208. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 5 December 1907.

209. *D. O. No. 145 (Public) of 12 July 1906 from H. H. Risley to Sir A. Godley*, Para 30. *Home Public Progs. A* July 1906 n. 124.

210. *Letter No. 2 T. J., 6 June 1906, from Dacca Commissioner Le Mesurier to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam—Enclosure III of above, Ibid.*

picture of the disturbances. Roy stated that there was not a single Swadeshi shop in the whole area, and that some shops selling 'belati' had been opened only two months back, with one at Dhitpur supplying "the requirements of the zamindar regularly". "The Swadeshi organization never took a firm hold in this part of the country, and I have the direct avowal of Syed Nurul Huda, the Muhammadan Marriage Registrar of Iswargunj, that the present disturbance is not in any way connected with Swadeshi, but that the eyes of the Muhammadans have been opened by the preaching of the Maulvis, to the exactions of the Hindu landlords".²¹¹ Next year, Divisional Commissioner R. Nathan's survey of the Mymensingh riots named boycott as "an important general factor"; yet he himself admitted that Swadeshi had been relatively weak in Jamalpur, while his subordinates had quite categorically stated that the movement was virtually non-existent in Dewangunj and Phulpur—while the pro-Swadeshi shopkeepers attacked at Bakshigunj had been notorious usurers as well.²¹² It is also very significant that the *Nawab Sahib Subichar* and the *Red Pamphlet* while enumerating Hindu misdeeds with great gusto remained entirely silent about the alleged suffering caused by the boycott.²¹³

The behaviour of some local officials, British as well as Muslim, provided some substance for the oft-repeated nationalist charge of Governmental instigation and connivance. Thus the *Sandhya* accused sub-inspector Fazlur Rahman of encouraging the Mogra hat rioters²¹⁴—a charge largely confirmed by the comment of his superior which appears in the official record: "Fazlur Rahman was

211. *Deputy Magistrate Debendraprasad Roy to the District Magistrate of Mymensingh, 25 May 1906*—*Ibid.*

212. *R. Nathan's Report*, forwarded by the *Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to the Government of India (Home)*, No. 374C, 17 August 1907—pp. 14, 26. *Home Political Progs. 4 December 1907* n. 58. *Mymensingh District Magistrate Clarke to Nathan, Dewangunj 8 May 1907; First Report of Additional District Magistrate Garlick to Nathan, 18 May 1907, Clarke to Nathan, 20 May 1907*—*Home Political Progs. A July 1907* n. 13-14, 16.

213. As a statement by 15 Hindu leaders pointed out in July 1907, in a refutation of Morley's accusation in the House of Commons that boycott had been the principal cause of the riots. *Home Political Progs. A July 1907* n. 189-192, *Appendix I*.

214. *Sandhya, 29 March 1907—RNP(B) for week ending 6 April 1907.*

plucky enough, but his sympathies were rather too obviously with his co-religionists".²¹⁵ The District Magistrate himself "showed a most unfortunate want of discretion" in doing virtually nothing during the first two days of the Comilla disturbances except informing the Hindu leaders who had sought his help that the latter "were really responsible for what had occurred", and that the whole affair was just "a temporary ebullition of temper" caused by the insult to the Nawab.²¹⁶ At Jamalpur the police at first busied themselves mainly with disarming the Hindu volunteers who had barricaded themselves inside the Dayamoyee temple on the night of 27-28 April, and they committed an act of somewhat doubtful legality in searching without warrant the 'cutchery' of the Gauripur estate for arms.²¹⁷ The contrast between the treatment of Ibrahim Khan and the hounding down of Liakat Hussain was glaring, and no serious efforts seem to have been made to trace the author of the even more incendiary *Bilati-Barjan-Rahasya* [The Mysteries of Boycott] which appeared a few months later without a press-line.²¹⁸ But in all this the British were only utilizing tensions already present in Bengali society—"Satan cannot enter till he finds a flaw", as Rabindranath wisely remarked a few months after the Jamalpur riots.²¹⁹

The nationalists laid a great deal of emphasis on the role of communal leaflets and mulla propaganda in fomenting the riots—and behind all such activities they suspected the machinations of their

215 *D. O. of Brahmanbaria Sub-Divisional Officer to District Magistrate Lees, Akhaura 27 March 1907. Enclosure III A to Luson's Report, op. cit. Home Public Progs. A May 1907 n. 163.*

216. *Memorandum of H. D. Lees, 13 March 1907.* The critical comment about Lees' conduct occurs in *H. Luson's Report No. 11G, 15 March 1907—Home Public Progs. A May 1907 n. 163.*

217. *Le Mesurier to Risley, 4 May and 6 May 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 13.* H. A. Stuart later commented that "there was undoubtedly . . . mismanagement at Comilla and we have yet to see whether the searches of the Hindu Zamindars cutcherees . . . were entirely regular and correct". *Note of 23 June 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 189.*

218. *Bengalee*, 19 July 1907.

219. *Byadhi O Pratikar*, Sravana 1314 [July-August 1907] Tgore, *Rachnabali*, Vol. X, p. 627.

bogey-man, Nawab Salimulla of Dacca. The official accounts tend to minimize both factors: thus Le Mesurier argued that most copies of the *Nawab Saheber Subichar* had been seized by the police before the Iswargunj riots,²²⁰ while the *Red Pamphlet* apparently did not reach the Jamalpur-Dewangunj area before the disturbances there.²²¹ Nathan tried to play down also the role of the maulvies, about whom "careful enquiries", he stated, had shown "very little result".²²² But Maulvi Samiruddin had been very active indeed at Iswargunj the year before, where religious meetings ('waz') had often preceded the disturbances; though at least part of his motive seems to have been the very secular one of getting into the Local Board—which he managed to do on 27 April after rowdy scenes by Muslim mobs had prevented many Hindus from voting.²²³ In the Brahmanbaria area of north Tippera, the riots had been preceded by a Muslim "awakening", through meetings organized by the local muktear Munshi Abdur Rauf.²²⁴ The first report on the Phulpur outbreak attributed it mainly "to the preaching of Muhammedans to convert all Hindus to their faith".²²⁵ Further investigations found little evidence of any visit by outside agents, but brought out the fact that there were "a large number of Maulvis from Noakhali, Tippera and Chittagong permanently settled in Phulpur thana as school teachers".²²⁶ At Dewangung and Bakshigunj, "notices were found stuck up calling on Muhammedans to loot and beat Hindus and to marry their widows, as Government and Nawab

220. *Dacca Commissioner Le Mesurier to Chief Secretary Lyon, 6 June 1906*, Para 7—*Home Public Progs. A July 1906 n. 124, Enclosure III.*

221. *R. Nathan's Report, op. cit.*, p. 31—*Home Political Progs. A December 1907 n. 58.*

222. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

223. *Report of Debendraprasad Roy, 25 May 1906*, paras 3-6—*Home Public Progs. A July 1906 n. 124.*

224. *Note by A. E. Scroope, ex-Subdivisional Officer of Brahmanbaria, 29 March 1907—H. Luson's Report, 19 April 1907, Enclosure I. Home Public Progs A. May 1907 n. 169.*

225. *First Report of Additional District Magistrate Garlick, 18 May 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 14.*

226. *Second Report of Additional District Magistrate Garlick, 22 May 1907—Home Political Progs A. July 1907 n. 15.*

of Dacca had ordered it, and it was asserted that fanatical Maulvis had preached to this effect . . .”²²⁷ In the Ekdala hat case, the Crown prosecutor attributed the looting of Hindu shops to Wahhabi incitement.²²⁸

Salimulla’s bland disclaimer two months after the Mymensingh riots of all responsibility for the mullas who had often used his name is not particularly convincing.²²⁹ But it would be quite unhistorical to accept in its entirety the nationalist theory that the rioters were all hired agents of the Nawab. The communal-minded moulavi, muktear, or petty official represented in fact a definite trend within rural Muslim society, brought into existence by the spread of education stimulating social ambition among the upper stratum of the peasantry—now becoming relatively prosperous through jute cultivation. The Iswargunj riot accounts vividly illustrate this development. “With the increase of education the cleverer young men passed through schools and Madrassas and came back to preach a movement of social and religious reform”²³⁰—in this way the revivalist ideas disseminated at the seminaries of Dacca and Chittagong percolated down to the village level. “Their education gives them a certain status in society elsewhere, but when they return home, the local Hindu zamindars will not regard them as anything better than cultivators or tailors as their fathers were. . . . Maulvi Samiruddin, the Muhammedan preacher . . . went to see the Gangatia zamindar of this neighbourhood, and seated himself in his presence. The latter, a high caste and orthodox Hindu, had him turned out of the house and insulted”.²³¹ The *Nawab Saheber*

227. *Report of Mymensingh Magistrate L. O. Clarke to Dacca Divisional Commissioner R. Nathan 20 May 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 15.*

228. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2 December 1907.

229. *Mussalman*, 12 July 1907. Gailick’s argument in extenuation of the Nawab is even less plausible . . . “his own estates, none of which are in the disturbed area, have always been perfectly quiet and free from disturbances”—Salimulla was hardly likely to encourage anti-zamindar sentiments among his own tenants. *First Report of Garlick, 18 May 1907—Home Political Progs. A July 1907 n. 14.*

230. *Le Mesurier to Lyon*, 2RJ, 6 June 1906, Para 10—describing the background of the Iswargunj riots. *Home Public Progs. A July 1906 n. 124.*

231. *Clarke to Le Mesurier*, No. 1186 J, 1 June 1906, para 16—*Ibid.*

Subichar which appeared shortly afterwards had as its main theme zamindar Atul Babu of Gangatia being made to eat beef by the Nawab of Dacca for having fined a Muslim raiyat for cow-slaughter.²³²

Even if the mullas are regarded as Salimulla's paid agents, what would require explanation is the response they managed to obtain from the Muslim lower classes. That the real answer lies in the anti-zamindar and anti-mahajan tone of communal propaganda and activity is evident even from nationalist Hindu sources. The forebodings expressed by the *Charu Mihir* in the first months of 1906 have been cited already. After the Iswargunj outbreak, the *Bengalee* of 1 June 1906 commented that the Muslim peasants of Mymensingh had always been in "quite a subordinate position", but there had been little conflict so far due to their acceptance of "something like feudal relation"; but now the maulvis had investigated them "to assert their own rights against the Hindus, to refrain from serving under them, to try to evade payment of rent to their Hindu landlords or at least never to pay rent at any higher rate than three rupees and six annas". In the wake of the Jamalpur riots, the *Bande Mataram* of 17 May 1907 published a letter describing the contemporary struggle as essentially "between the ignorant multitude and the educated few". "In the Eastern Bengal . . . the low class Mahomedans represent manual labour and the Hindus with a sprinkling of higher class Mohammedans represent capital". Four days later the same newspaper printed a report from Pabna describing the impact of maulvi propaganda on the Muslim there: "A queer notion seems to have taken possession of their mind that they will no longer have to pay any rents to anybody". The maulvis were said to "inciting the Mahomedans to eke out their livelihood by plundering the Hindu kafirs". The report mentions incidentally that there had been no rain in the district for some time, and prices were "abnormally high". It is interesting that the *Mihir-O-Sudhakur*, too, named not boycott but the "oppression of the Hindu Zamindars towards their raiyats" as "the first and the

232. Extracts from the *Nawab Saheber Subichar*, contained in Debendraprasad Roy's *Report of 25 May 1906*, Para 5—*Ibid.*

“most prominent cause” of the riots, mentioning in particular insecurity of tenure, abwabs, and bans on cow-slaughter.²³³

Another aspect of communal propaganda is indicated by the *Charu Mihir* of 22 May 1906: “The Maulvis go about preaching that the end of British rule in India is at hand and that the day is coming for the revival of Islam; that the Lieutenant Governor B. Fuller has been compelled to establish dushti, i.e. an alliance with the Nawab of Dacca”.²³⁴ An apocalyptic note is indeed evident in the *Nawab Saheber Subichar*, with Salimulla as the rather unlikely Messiah;²³⁵ he is said to have conquered Assam, Sylhet, Chittagong—and Allah permitting, he might one day conquer the whole world. The Hindus petition against the treatment of Atul Babu, but the Viceroy has no power over the Nawab, while the Emperor and Prime Minister in England have a good laugh and uphold the judgement. The *Red Pamphlet* combines vitriolic abuse of the Hindus with a more direct appeal to the peasants:- . . . “in one day we can send all Hindus to hell. In Bengal, consider, you form the majority: you are the peasant, from agriculture comes all wealth. Where did the Hindu get his wealth from? He had nothing, he has stolen it from you and become wealthy . . . Through the swajati movement we shall develop ourselves”.²³⁶ The pamphlet contains a poem recalling the glories of the Arab conquests, and another

233. *Mihir-O-Sudhakar*, 14 June 1907—*RNP(B)* for week ending 22 June 1907.

234. *RNP(B)* for week ending 2 June 1906.

235. *Debendraprasad Roy's Report*, *op. cit.*, contains the following transliterated extract:

“Kattek mulluk Shaha karen dakhla
Mama sadhya nahı nam likhi se sakal
Asam pahar sab araze Assam
Sylhet dakhla kare or Chattegam . . .
Alla chahe thora dın dunıya tamam
Dakhla kar:a dibe Shaha neknam.”

236. Full text in *Bengalee*, 5 May 1907.

“—ek dinei Hinduke jahanname pathaite pari/Dekha bangadeshe tomader
sankhya adhik, tomra krishak, kushi kaje dhana utpattir bee; Hindu dhana
kotha paila, Hindu dhana bindumatre nai/Hindu kaushale tomader dhana
niya dhance haiyacche/—amra swajati andolan kaiya atmyonnoti kariba/”.

calling on Muslims to shun the Hindus and no longer surrender their wealth to them.²³⁷

In the urban riots of Comilla, the Muslim mob was “composed partly of students and partly of ordinary Muhammedans of the lower class in bazar”. Among the latter many were “gariwalas who earn a large part of their living by driving Hindus of the better classes to court, the railway station and elsewhere”. The Divisional Commissioner reported that “bringing the leading Hindu and Muhammedan gentlemen together . . . was an easy thing to do; the problem was that the latter had little control or influence over their lower class co-religionists”.²³⁸ Giving the background to the Mogra riots, the *Bengalee* of 29 March 1907 asserted that “low-class Muslims of Maniardi village did not pay rent regularly to Hindu ijjardars of Mogra hat where they had some shops”.

In Mymensingh district, with its big and often absentee Hindu landlords, the Tenancy Act of 1885 had become virtually “a dead letter”. At Dewangunj the rents of occupancy raiyats had been enhanced through extra-judicial agreement every 7 or 5 years (in place of the legal 15).²³⁹ A petition dated 26 January 1906 from a Mymensingh Raiyats’ Association, said to have been founded in January 1903, complained that there had been a ten-fold enhancement of rent since 1793, that the tenants were being made to pay cesses for digging tanks or wells, planting trees, and constructing ‘pucca’ dwellings, and that Surjyakanta Acharyya was demanding a ‘mathote’ of 50% on the annual rent “in this year of scarcity”. It also alleged that moneylenders were charging a monthly interest of up to 20%.²⁴⁰ The petition with its unusually sophisticated tone and its demand for free transfer rights to ‘jotes’ obviously emanated

237. “Shunare Moslemgan hoye ek man,
Diyo na Hindur ghare apanar dhan.
Moslem adham shei Moslem adham,
Hindur shahita kare Bande Mataram.”—*Ibid.*

238. *H. Luson’s Report, 11G, 15 March 1907, Para 15—Home Public Progs. A May 1907 n. 163.*

239. *Note by R. Nathan, 6K—July 1907 p. 26. - Home Political Progs. A December 1907 n. 58,*

240. *Debendrraprasad Roy’s Report 25 May 1906—Home Public Progs. A July 1906 n. 124.*

from the better-off 'jotedar' section of the raiyats, who were benefiting from the high prices of primary products and the roaring trade in jute. Such men, however, were probably all the more susceptible to revivalist propaganda—as the District Magistrate of Mymensingh pointed out, "the raiyats being well off do not mind paying cesses for most purposes, but object to pay for Kali Pujas and other kinds of idolatry. The zamindars too object to their killing cows."²⁴¹

Before and during the Iswargunj riots, there was a widespread "wild and extravagant" expectation that the Government would reduce the rent to Rs. 3-6 per *ara* (a local unit of about 5 bighas). It is interesting that Administrative Report of 1882-83 had mentioned an identical demand—probably, as Le Mesurier commented, this was "a reminiscence of a former pargana rate."²⁴² At Bakshigunj next year, the first targets were the shops of Shaha moneylenders; wherever possible, the chests were broken and "the bonds were taken out and torn into shreds."²⁴³ Over and above the exorbitant interest, the mahajans had recently started to levy an 'Iswar Britti' for the upkeep of Hindu images. "It is particularly worthy of note that both at Bakshigunj and at Dewangunj the rioting began by an attack upon the idol which had been erected by the hated Iswar Britti."²⁴⁴ Once started, iconoclasm of course gathered a momentum of its own, as for instance at Melamgunj where the Muslims—all "respectable citizens", according to the Magistrate who tried them, "smashed the Kalibari near the market and then went from dwelling to dwelling destroying the family idol houses".²⁴⁵

At Dewangunj and Phulpur, the contagion spread to the lowest ranks of rural society, and the official record spoke of something like a general "plunder of the rich by the poor", with Hindu cultivators joining in the loot at some places and "Mussalmans and

241. *Clarke to Le Mesurier*, 1 June 1906, para 14—*Ibid.*

242. *Debendraprasad Roy*, *op. cit.*, para 7, 9. *Le Mesurier to Lyon*, 6 June 1906, para 5, *Ibid.*

243. *Note by R. Nathan*, p. 27—*op. cit.*

244. *Ibid.*

245. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Marwaris" being robbed "nearly as much as Bengalis".²⁴⁶ Garlick reported from Phulpur that what had been roused was "not only the religious fervour of the respectable cultivators but the criminal instincts of the *Budmashes*" [russians] and he deduced from the fact that at Defuliya paddy had been taken away but sacks containing seed grain spared the conclusion that "the rioters were not mere agriculturists, and probably had no land, and were thorough *budmashes*".²⁴⁷ The Dewangunj disturbance was "purely one of the *budmash* population rising upon owners of property. The *budmashes* and decoits seem to be 70% of the population". [sic].²⁴⁸ Such semi-proletarian elements must have been hard hit by the rise in prices.

But if the social distress and discontent were genuine enough, it must also be emphasized that their distorted expression through communal riots and plunder robbed the outburst of all permanent value from the point of view of the peasant. The *Soltan* of 28 June 1907 gave a vivid description of the sufferings of Muslims in the riot-affected areas—harassment by the punitive police, heavy judicial expenses forcing sale or mortgage of lands, refusal of loans by Hindu mahajans, seizure of land for rent-arrears by zamindars.²⁴⁹ It charged the party represented by the *Mihir-O-Sudhakar* with responsibility for all such woes,²⁵⁰ and in fact the Muslim communal leaders seem to have used the peasants as so much cannon-fodder in their fight with the Hindus for jobs and Council seats. No organized attempt was apparently made to provide funds or legal aid for the Muslim accused in the riot cases. When the authorities decided to take no action against the policemen responsible for the Sherpur firing, it was a Hindu newspaper—the *Basumati*—which protested;²⁵¹ the Lieutenant-Governor on the other hand could find

246. *Clarke to Nathan*, 20 May 1907; *Garlick to Clarke*, 18 May 1907; *Clarke to Nathan*, 8 May 1907. *Home Political Progs. A July 1970* n. 16, 14, 13.

247. *Garlick to Clarke*, 18 May 1907—*Home Political Progs. A July 1907* n. 14. The social assumption is interesting and reminds one of that other gem of Anglo-Indian officialese—the "criminal tribe".

248. *Clarke to Nathan*, 8 May 1907—*Home Political Progs. A July 1907* n. 13.

249. *RNP (B) for Week ending 6 July 1907*.

250. *Soltan*, 7 February 1908—*RNP (B) for week ending 15 February 1908*.

251. *Basumati*, 23 November 1907—*RNP (B) for week ending 30 November 1907*.

solace in the fact "that educated Mahomedans have altogether refused to respond in any way to the attempts made by certain newspapers, well known to be inspired by influences hostile to Government, to draw them into regarding the occurrence as in any way an injustice to the Mahomedans of the Province".²⁵²

The riots of 1906-07 were of crucial importance in the evolution of nationalist thought and practice.²⁵³ Moderate efforts to meet the challenge through talks with Muslim upper-class leaders obviously ignored the deeper roots of the problem, while their appeals to the Government for strict enforcement of law and order sounded insufferably mendicant to the radical youth. Rabindranath offered a far more profound analysis of the riots, and the re-thinking they induced in him led the poet to make a decisive and final break with the traditionalist ideas which had swayed him for some time. But his call for building a 'mahajati' on the basis of a repudiation of all sectarian barriers and prejudices, however sacrosanct, and his appeals for patient constructive work in villages to bridge the gulf between the bhadralok and the masses, found little response from among his contemporaries. Far more attractive seemed the message of the *Bande Mataram* and the *Yugantar*, with its militancy and romantic appeal, its promise of a heroic and yet essentially simple road to freedom, and its assumption—so conveniently attuned to bhadralok preconceptions—that the rioters were mere hired agents, no more than "hooligans" and "Indian Black Hundreds".²⁵⁴ But 'revolution' with the rural masses inert or hostile could mean in practice only action by an elite, and so Extremism became transmuted into Terrorism, and the *Raja Ke* theme of Hindu-Muslim unity gave place to the *Sonar Bangla* call for "Russian" methods as exemplified apparently by the shooting down of a Muslim at

252. *Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to Government of India (Home) No. 7660, 28 November 1907—Home Political Progs. A January 1908 n. 45.*

253. For a more detailed discussion, see my article *Trends in Bengal's Swadeshi Movement (1903-1908)—Bengal Past and Present*, January-July, July-December 1965.

254. *The East Bengal Disturbances*—Editorial in *Bande Mataram*, 25 May 1907.

Comilla.²⁵⁵

The impact of the riots on Muslims though, at least as reflected in the newspapers, seems at first sight much less evident. The sharp changes that occurred in Muslim politics during the succeeding decade were due to quite different factors. If the *Mussalman* after 1908 for a time drifted away from nationalism, that was because of the lure of extra Council seats and not the memory of the Mymensingh riots. The bloody riots in Bihar and United Provinces during 1917-1918—definitely provoked by the Hindus, according to Dr. R. C. Majumdar²⁵⁶—did not prevent the rapprochement between the political leaders of the two communities, a process which on the Muslim side had been set off by the abrogation of the Partition and greatly accelerated by the British treatment of Turkey.

But that the main lesson of 1906-07 from the Muslim point of view—communalism to be really effective in Bengal must have an agrarian base—had not been entirely forgotten is indicated by a fascinating pamphlet entitled *Krishak Bandhu* [Friend of the Peasant] published from Calcutta in 1910.²⁵⁷ This 112-page poem ends with the conventional conclusions of Muslim separatism: attacks on the Congress, Moderate as well as Extremist, as an essentially Hindu body, the danger of a 'Swāmī' which Hindus would surely dominate, a call for support for the Muslim League, evocation of past glories of Islam—the only unexpected reference in this section is to the “socialists” who have to be fought along with the terrorists.²⁵⁸ But all this is preceded by a long and often quite moving account

255. The text of *Raja Ke* is given in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* 16 September 1905; the *Sonar Bangla* leaflet (dated April 1907) is contained in *Private Papers of Aswini Coomar Banerji*

256. *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Volume II (1963), pp. 249-250.

257. Bangiya nireaha krishakdigat param shubhanudhyāyi/*Krishak Bandhu*/Garib Shayer pranita/Calcutta—1317 [1910].

258. “—Shāntimoy e bhārata je sab shaitān,

Biplab aniyāt badhe mānusher pātna,

Narādhām se sabāt desh-shātrū bate,

E dale bangiya hindu, mārhātta gana,

Punjāber āryadal hate bahu gan,

Socialister dal karecche gathān

Karā chāi ihāder mul-utpātan”—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

of the woes of the peasant, on whose back-breaking labour society rests, and who is yet oppressed by all²⁵⁹—and the author specifies the zamindar with his perpetual cesses and fines and tyrannical subordinates, the mahajan charging exorbitant interest, the police, the shop-keeper, even the village headman. As the poem proceeds, the exploiters merge in the figure of the ‘babu’, who is also the Congress stalwart, while the peasant is identified with the Muslim and urged to remember his solidarity with his co-religionists.²⁶⁰ The author deftly side-tracks the anti-feudal conclusions which might have seemed implicit in his premises—his advice to the peasant is not a struggle against the zamindar or mahajan, but self-improvement through education on proper Islamic lines. The peasants are urged to follow the Koran, pay ‘zakat’ regularly to the mulla, reject advice of false prophets preaching syncretism, and remember the glories of Islam.²⁶¹ They are also advised to form ‘Anjumans’ and rally behind the Muslim League. How all this is going to help them to end the oppression sketched out in such vivid detail in the first stanzas of the poem is of course not explained. On the economic plane, there is the recurrent advice for agricultural improvements through wells and canals (the Punjab example is cited here), improved techniques and seeds and crop diversification; the Muslim peasant is urged to colonize virgin lands in Sylhet, Cachar, Assam, the Sunderbans,

259. “Tumee shashyer rājā, bhumit mālik
Sakaler cheye tabo gaurab adhik,
Tomāi sramer phal sakelei khāy,
Kintu tomā pāne keho phiriyā na chay.”—*Ibid.*, p. 1

260. “Tomār arthete babu ukil moktār
Bhuri phulāiya mari dey kī bāhār
Tomar arthete bābugiri bābuder
Tumi na janmāle shashya maran tādei
'Congo-rasa' 'ranga-rasa' karī bābulāla
Katadīn karila bhārat talamala
Banger krishak prāy saba musalman
Hindu habe dui teen ānā pārimān
Tomāt kalyane jamidai - jamidāt
Tumi binā astita kothay thāke tāt ?
Musalmān mātreyi je paraspai bhāt
E kathā bhula nā kehā, bhula nāhi chāt”—*Ibid.*, pp. 16-20, 24,

261. See p. 216.

and elsewhere, and even try to become a trader in his own right.²⁶² The prosperous farmers of Transvaal and Denmark are held up as examples worthy of imitation.²⁶³ The poem visualizes, in fact, something like a 'kulak' programme—though there is also the pious advice that the rich peasant should not turn an exploiter and usurer himself.²⁶⁴

A generation later, Fazlul Haq's Krishak Praja Party would sweep the 1937 elections in Bengal with its jotedar base and anti-zamindar programme. Driven into the arms of the Muslim League, at least in part by the social inhibitions of the Bengal Congress leadership, Fazlul Haq's party would impart to its ally a mass-basis which the latter had never enjoyed before in Bengal.²⁶⁵ And so a national movement which had entered its militant phase with one Partition of Bengal would culminate forty-two years later with another, far more permanent and agonizing Partition.

261. "Dharma upadesh shuna mānaha korān
 Kariben dayamoy mangal bidhān
 Samay zākāt dibe na karibe der
 Challish bhager ek bhāg dite habe
 Tahar uttam phal parakūle pabe
 Bangālār nānā sthāne ncrar fakir
 Jibanta pishach rupe hayecche jāhir
 Shaitāner chelā, tārā ādat shaitān
 Uhārā 'moslem' nahe, janibe 'ckin'
 Apanāke heena jāti kabhu nā bhābibe
 'Moslem' sarbacha jati, manete rakhibe"—*Ibid.*, pp. 26, 39, 45-46.

262. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-35, 58-68. Even the districts in Bengal suitable for different kinds of crops are specified in the poem.

263. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-49.

264. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

265. Gankovsky and Gordon-Polonskaya, *A History of Pakistan*, pp. 65, 80-81.

